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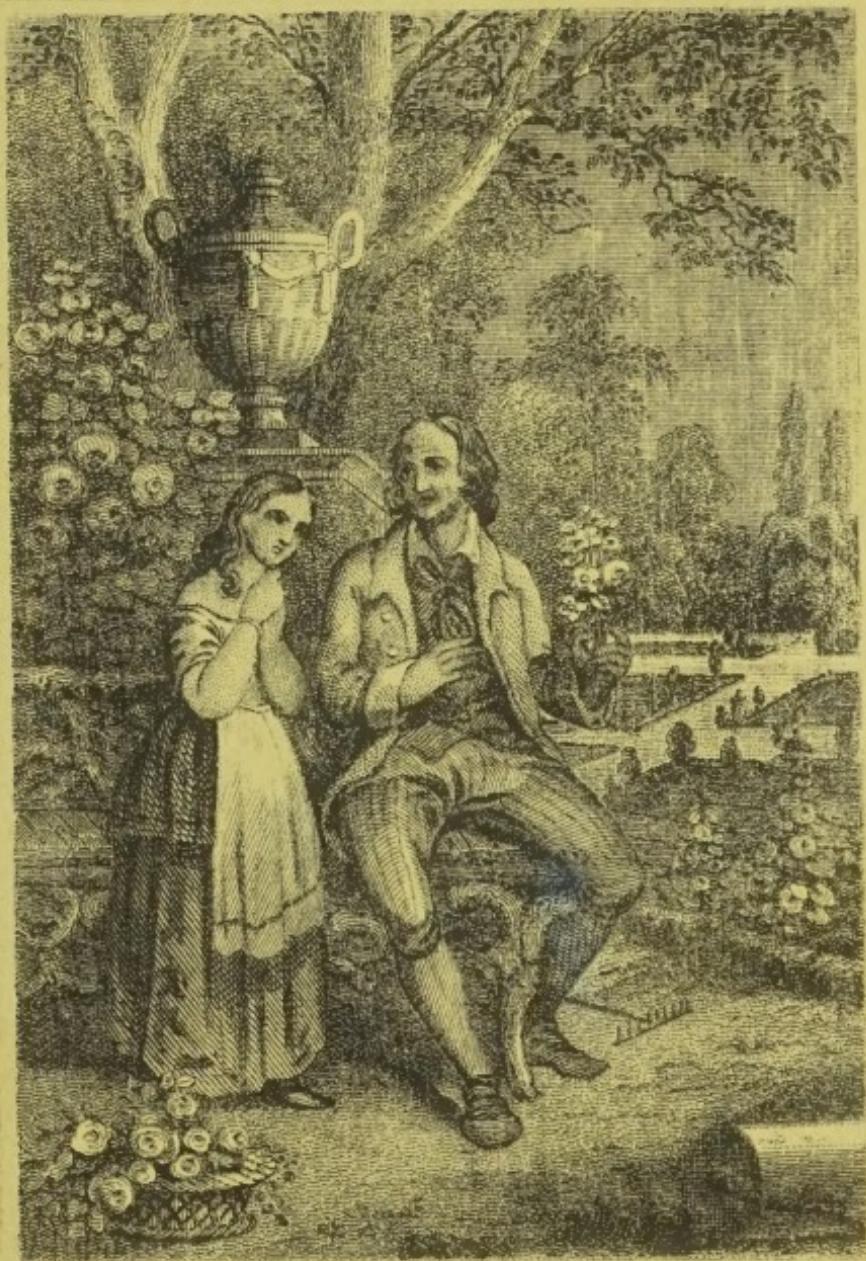
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THE BASKET OF FLOWERS.

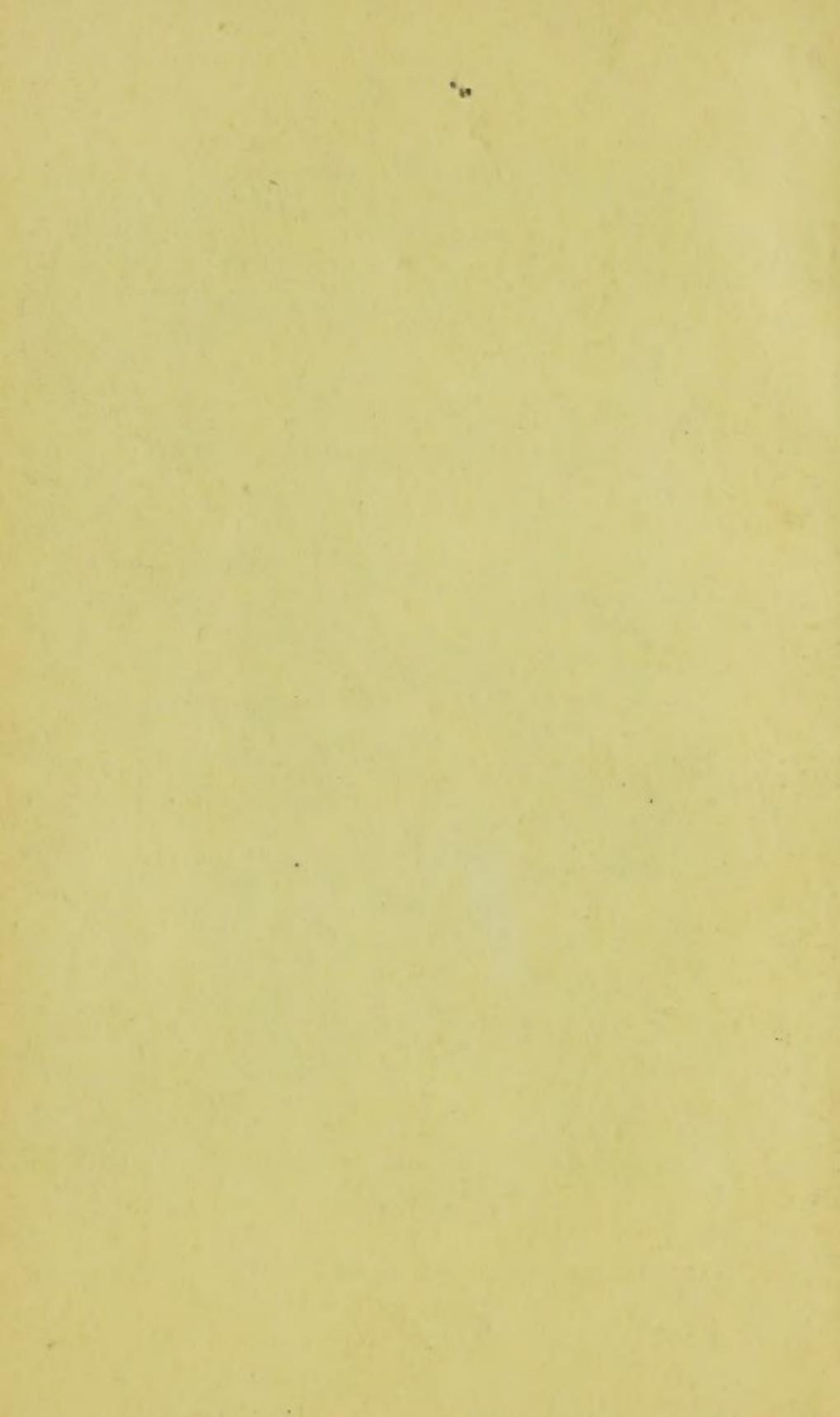


THE
BASKET OF FLOWERS,
A TALE FOR THE YOUNG.



HALIFAX.

MILNER AND SOWERBY



THE

BASKET OF FLOWERS;

OR,

PIETY AND TRUTH TRIUMPHANT.

A TALE FOR THE YOUNG.

BY CHRISTOPHER VON SCHMID.

TRANSLATED

BY G. T. BEDELL, D.D.

HALIFAX:
MILNER AND SOWERBY.

1855.

INTRODUCTION.

THE following beautiful and useful story was first read in French, and the idea immediately suggested itself to my mind—that with some alterations, to make it convey lessons of clear and decided evangelical truth, it would be a very interesting little work for the libraries of Sunday Schools, and every variety of youthful readers. The story is very touching, and the lessons taught are most useful and important. I have never read lessons of practical piety drawn with more simplicity, than they are in this little book—from the beauties of nature. Indeed, in almost every chapter we find, addressed to the youthful heart, sermons, whose texts are the flowers of the garden.

Where the story is merely translated, the translation is a very free one, and in many places large omissions are made, and in others considerable additions will be found.

G. T. B.



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CHAPTER XXI.

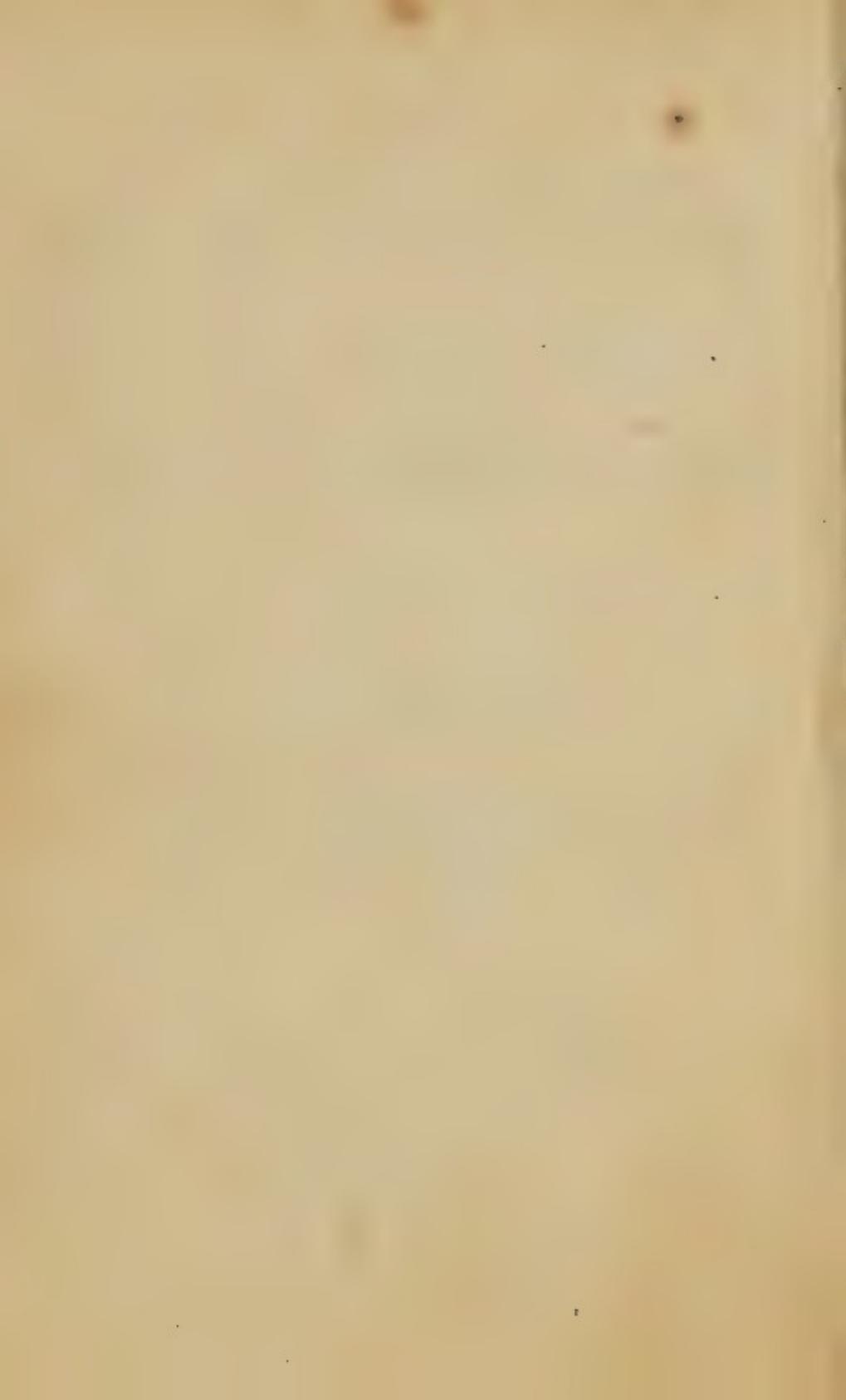
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THE BASKET OF FLOWERS.

CHAPTER I.

EARLY HISTORY OF MARY.

CHE relation which we are about to give in this little book, is about some interesting transactions which occurred a long time ago, and in a country far removed from our own. This will account for some manners and customs which are not altogether familiar to our young readers ; but we shall endeavour to make the history so plain and familiar, that all who read may understand the valuable instructions which it is intended to convey. Human nature is the same in all countries, and the operations of divine grace are the same in all countries ; and therefore the principles which will be developed in this history, and the conduct which will be described, are such as are

in constant operation everywhere about us. The whole history is full of interest and of the most valuable, moral, and religious instruction; one which we are persuaded our young readers will peruse with pleasure, and one from which they may reap very great advantages.

James Rode, who was the father of Mary, was born of poor but respectable parents in Germany. When he was young he went to learn the art of gardening, from the gardener of the Count of Eichbourg. As he was a young man of good natural understanding, and of an amiable disposition, and distinguished for his uprightness of character, he soon became a great favourite with all; and instead of going away after he had learned his trade, to follow it elsewhere, the count took him into his own employment, and so faithfully did he discharge his duties, that as he advanced in life he was rewarded by the present of a little cottage, and land sufficient to afford him a decent maintenance by gardening. While he was quite young, James Rode had been brought to a knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus Christ. He had been born again of the Spirit, and these are the reasons why he had been enabled to discharge his duties. He married a young woman in the neighbourhood, who was an orphan, but who had tasted of the same precious gift of God; and thus James showed his obedience to the divine precept to "marry only in the Lord;" a precept

which, being so much neglected, brings a vast deal of unhappiness to multitudes, both male and female. For several years James and his wife travelled the pilgrimage of life together; in their humble way so adorning the doctrine of God their Saviour in all things, as not only to win respect and affection to themselves, but even to the religion which they professed. No matter how humble the situation any real child of God may occupy, if he is consistent in his walk and conversation, he is a witness for the truth of religion, which no enemy can be able to gainsay. Such were James and his wife, but as there are no conditions of life, high or low, from which affliction and death can be excluded, this pious couple were frequently called in the providence of God to bear their portion of that discipline by which a merciful God secures to himself the hearts of his real children. Several of the offspring of this pious pair were in faith consigned to the cold tomb, "waiting for the general resurrection at the last day, and the life of the world to come;" and at length the mother herself, after a brief and painful sickness, followed her children to the same narrow house—the grave. She died as she had lived, in the full hope of everlasting glory, founded on the promises of HIM who is "the resurrection and the life." The grief of the husband was softened by the resignation of the gospel, and the blissful prospect of meeting where friends who have loved the Lord, can nei-

ther be separated from Him or one another. When those we lose "die in the Lord," we may say,—

"Why should we mourn departed friends,
Or shake at death's alarms?
Death's but the servant Jesus sends
To call them to his arms?"

At the time when this history commences, James Rode was more than sixty years of age, and his hair almost as white as the snow upon the mountains. Of his numerous family one daughter remained. Her he had called MARY, after her mother. This child was but five years of age at her mother's death. By all the neighbours she was called a beautiful girl, and sometimes they were indiscreet enough to call her so before her face—a very great mistake, as all children are naturally prone to vanity. What was really worth calling beautiful, was, that she dearly loved her father, and was modest and obedient. Without these all external appearances are worth nothing. When Mary came to be fifteen years of age, her father gave her the entire charge of the household affairs, and she took such good care that everything about the house was kept in the most perfect cleanliness; even the kitchen utensils were always scoured so beautiful, that they might have been mistaken for new.

James Rode, as we have already said, was a gardener. He made his living by the cultivation of fruits and vegetables, which once or twice a

week, similar to our custom about England, he carried to market in the town, which was a short distance from his farm. His great delight, however, was in the cultivation of flowers, and in this delightful occupation, Mary continually assisted him, when she could be spared from her household concerns. She counted the hours devoted to this occupation among the happiest of her life, for her father had the art of turning labour into pleasure by his instructing and entertaining, and, above all, his pious conversation.

Mary, who grew up as it were in the midst of the plants, and for whom the garden itself was a little world, had early discovered a decided taste for flowers; and thus in the hours which she had at her disposal, was always sure of an agreeable occupation. She cultivated the young plants with great care and assiduity.

The buds of every strange species were objects of delightful study. She busied her young imagination in suggesting what kind of flowers they would produce; she was hardly able to wait till they were expanded; and then when the flower so impatiently expected appeared in all its splendour, she was filled with joy. The old gardener used to say, "Let others spend their money for jewels, and silks, and other vanities, I will spend mine for flower seeds. Silks, and satins, and jewels, cannot procure for our children so pure a pleasure, as these beautiful exhibitions of the wisdom and the

benevolence of God." In truth, there was not a day which did not bring some new pleasure to the heart of Mary. It was rare that any one passed the garden, without stopping to admire the beauty of the flowers; and even the children of the neighbourhood, as they passed by to school, never failed to peep across the hedge, and were generally rewarded by Mary with some little present of flowers as a token of her goodwill.

James, as a wise father, knew how to direct the taste of his daughter towards an end the most ennobling. In the beauty of the various flowers which adorned their garden—in the charming variety of their forms—in the justness of their proportions—in the magnificence of their colours—and in the exquisite sweetness of their perfumes, he taught her to see and to admire the power, the wisdom, and the goodness of God. These were some of the great ends towards which he directed all her pleasures; and thus may emphatically be said to have led her contemplations

"From nature up to nature's God."

It was the custom of James Rode to consecrate to prayer the first and best hours of the morning, and thus to let everything begin with God. In order to accomplish this, and not to neglect his work, it was his constant habit to rise early—a habit almost essential to a spiritual frame of mind. The life of a man is but poorly filled out, who cannot find one or two hours to discourse with his hea-

venly Father without interruption, and to occupy his contemplations with the things which relate to his everlasting peace. In those beautiful days of spring and summer which characterize the climate of his country, James would lead his daughter to an arbour in the garden, from whence could be heard the morning song of the feathered tribes, and from whence could be seen the whole of the garden, enamelled with flowers, and sparkling with dew—the range of vision taking in a rich plain, shining in the rays of the rising sun. It was in a situation so favourable to devotion as this, that he delighted to converse with his tender charge of that God, who gave the sun his brightness, who scattered o'er the earth the rain and the dew-drops, who fed the birds of the air, and dressed the flowers in their magnificent vestments. It was here that he accustomed the young mind of Mary to contemplate the Almighty, as the tender Father of mankind,—as that Father, who has manifested his love towards mankind in all the works of his creation, but still infinitely more in the gift of his dear Son to die for perishing sinners. It was here that he taught her her own condition as a sinner ; that he placed in terms the most affectionate before her the need of a Saviour, and gently led her to Jesus Christ. It was here that he taught her to bend her knees to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ ; and it was here that he had the happiness of perceiving that, like Lydia, the Lord

opened her heart to the reception of the truth. These morning exercises, as might well be expected, fixed more and more deeply on her heart the sentiment of piety.

In the flowers which Mary most loved, her father was accustomed to point out the emblem of those Christian graces which adorn the female character. Once, in the early part of March, when with transports of joy, she brought the first violet, he said, "Let this charming violet serve as an image of humility, of reserve, and of a ready, though always discreet disposition to oblige. Its clothing has the colour appropriated to modesty; it loves to flourish in places retired from common observation; and from beneath the leaves which cover it, it embalms the air with the most delicate perfumes. So my dear child, may you be, like the violet, a lover of silence, disdaining the show of gaudy colours, never seeking to attract unnecessary notice, but seeking to do good without parade, so long as the flower of your life shall bloom."

At the time when the lilies and the roses were altogether expanded, and when the garden with all its splendour, the old man seeing his daughter elated with joy, pointed with his finger to a lily shining in the rays of the rising sun, and said: "See in this lily, my daughter, the symbol of innocence; observe how neat and pure. Its leaves are of a whiteness which outvies that of the richest satin, and equals that of the driven snow.

Happy is the daughter whose heart is also pure; for remember who has said that it is the ‘pure in heart who shall see God.’ But the more pure the colour, the more difficult to preserve it in all its purity. The slightest taint can spoil the flower of the lily, and it must be touched even with the greatest precaution, lest it retain the blemish. Thus also, one word, one thought, can rob the mind of its purity. Let the rose,” said he, pointing to that flower, “be an image of modesty. The blush of modesty is more beautiful than that of the rose. Happy is the daughter whom the least approach to that which is indelicate will cause to blush, and thus be put on her guard against the approaching danger. The cheeks which readily blush will remain for a long time with their roseate hue, while those which fail to blush at the least indelicacy will soon become pale and wan, and devoted to an early death.” The father of Mary gathered some lilies and roses, and made of them a bouquet,* and putting it into her hands he said: “The lilies and roses are brothers and sisters, and nothing can equal the beauty of bouquets and garlands, where these flowers are mixed. Innocence and modesty are twin sisters, which cannot be separated. Yes, my dear child, that innocence might be always on her guard, God in his goodness, has given her modesty for a sister and companion to anticipate the approach of danger. Be

* Pronounced Bo-KAY—a bunch of flowers.

always modest and you will be always virtuous. Oh, if the will of God be so, may you always be enabled by his grace to preserve in your heart the purity of the lily. The rose on your cheek must fade, but it will be renewed again, if you but attain to the resurrection of the just, and then it shall flourish in immortal youth."

"The morning flow'rs display their sweets,
And gay their silken leaves unfold;
As careless of the noonday heats,
And fearless of the evening cold.

Nipp'd by the wind's unkindly blast,
Parch'd by the sun's more fervent ray,
The momentary glories waste,
The short liv'd beauties fade away.

So blooms the human face divine,
When youth its pride of beauty shows,
Fairer than spring the colours shine,
And sweeter than the op'ning rose.

But worn by slowly rolling years,
Or broke by sickness in a day,
The fading glory disappears,
And short liv'd beauties die away.

Yet these, new rising from the tomb,
With lustre brighter far shall shine;
Revive with ever-during bloom,
Safe from diseases and decline.

Let sickness blast and death devour,
If heaven shall recompense our pains;
Perish the grass and fade the flow'r,
If firm the word of God remains."

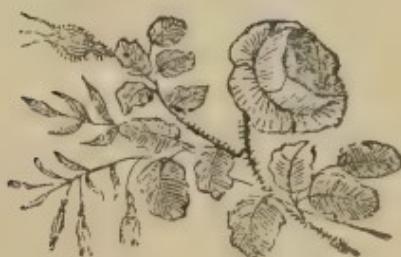
The most beautiful ornament of the garden was a dwarf apple tree, not higher than a rose-bush, which grew in a little circular hot-bed in the middle of the garden. James had planted it on the

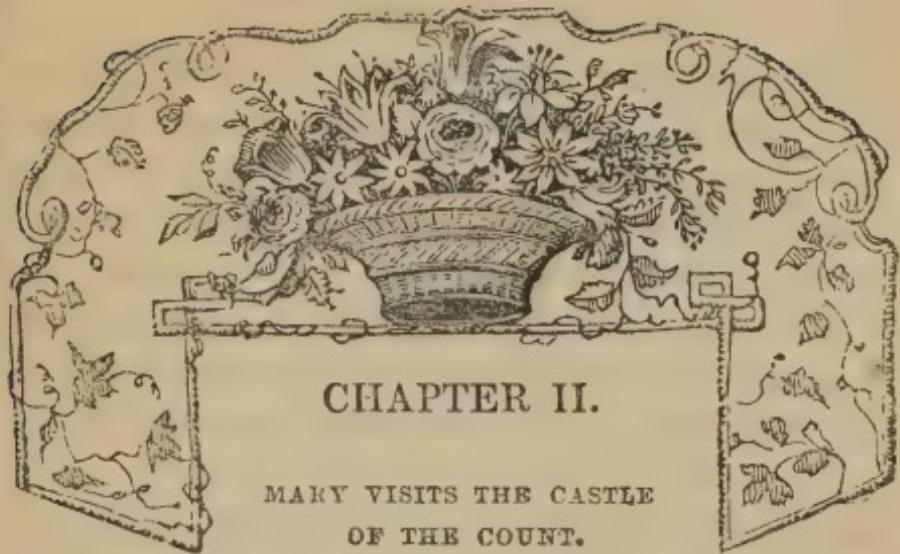
birthday of his daughter, and it gave them every year the most beautiful golden apples, spotted with red. One season it was peculiarly promising, and covered with blossoms. Mary did not fail to examine it every morning, and she would exclaim in ecstasy, "Oh, how beautiful, how superb this mixture of red and white ! One would believe that the little tree is but one bunch of flowers." One morning she came at the usual hour, but the frost had withered all the flowers, they were almost brown and yellow, and were fast shrivelling up by the sun. At this dismal sight, poor Mary burst into tears. "As the frost spoils the apple blossoms," said her judicious father, "so unholy gratifications mar the flower of youth. Tremble, my child, at the possibility of departing from the paths of rectitude. Ah, if the time should ever arrive when the delightful hopes which you have authorized should vanish, not for a year, like the hopes of this tree, but for your whole life, alas ! I should shed tears more bitter than those which trickle from your eyes. I should not enjoy a single hour of pleasure, but my grey hairs would be brought with sorrow to the grave." At thoughts like these James himself could not refrain from tears, and his words of affectionate solicitude made a deep impression on the tender heart of Mary.

Brought up under the zealous and persevering care of a father so wise and tender, Mary grew up among the flowers of the garden, fresh as the rose

—in purity like the lily—modest as the violet, and giving the most delightful hopes of future excellence, as a beautiful shrub in the time of flourishing. In fact she was a tender sapling, but the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified.

It was with a smile of satisfaction and gratitude that the old man always viewed his beautiful garden, of which the fruits repaid, and amply repaid, his assiduous care. But he was enabled to experience a satisfaction the most profound, when he beheld his daughter, in whom, by the grace of God resting on his own pious labours, the religious education which he gave her seemed to bring forth the most precious fruits to the praise and glory of God.





CHAPTER II.

MARY VISITS THE CASTLE
OF THE COUNT.

MN almost all countries, the month of May is remarkable for its charms, so much so, as to justify the language of the poet,—

“Sweet month,
If not the FIRST the FAIREST of the year.”

It was early in the charming month of May, that Mary went into a neighbouring wood to cut some branches of the willow and twigs of the hazel. She gathered them for the use of her old father, for when he was not busily engaged in the garden, he occupied his time in making baskets, particularly ladies' work-baskets. He made it a point never to be idle, for industry is essential to happiness and usefulness. It is melancholy to consider how much time is wasted by young persons and old. What our Saviour said in relation to the food with which he had miraculously fed the multitude in the wilderness, is in a very emphatic sense applicable to those little parts of time which, because

we may not have immediate occupation, we are apt to waste in idleness." "Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost." It is incalculable what might be gained to the Lord's cause, if those who call themselves Christians would but in some useful form devote to Christian benevolence those "fragments" of time which are so generally wasted. James Rode was never idle. He knew his duty too well, to waste any portion of that time which God had given him, and for which he knew he would have to render an account. It is true, that in the days in which he lived there were none of those blessed plans of Christian benevolence which are now so vigorously in motion for the conversion of the world, and therefore he had no such object in view in the full occupation of his time. He was industrious because it was his duty, and he laboured in the house in basket-making when he was not obliged to be in the garden, because the habits of industry had grown with his growth, and strengthened with his strength; and it was while thus occupied that Mary read to him in God's precious book, or he talked to her about the concerns of her immortal soul.

While Mary was in the woods gathering the materials for her father's basket-work, she found some beautiful specimens of the lily of the valley, and she gathered enough of them to make two bunches, one for her father, and the other for herself. When she had finished her work, she returned home by

a nearer path across an intervening meadow, and by so doing she met the Countess of Eichbourg and her daughter Amelia, who were taking an afternoon walk. Mary had very seldom seen either of them, for they lived for the most part of their time in the city ; but were now spending a few days at their chateau. As she could not avoid meeting them she stepped a little on one side, with true politeness, such as well-bred and pious young people will, to let them pass. But when they saw the beautiful bunches of lilies which she had, they stopped to admire them, and wanted to buy one. This Mary would not allow. She begged that the ladies would each accept a bunch, and this she did with such unaffected grace and good nature, that they could not refuse. Amelia requested her to gather more, and bring them to the chateau every morning, which she promised, and which she faithfully performed during the season in which the lilies were in bloom.

It is said, and the remark is justified by experience, that some of the most important circumstances of our life grow out of events apparently of the most trifling character. It proved so in the case of Mary, as the whole history will fully evince, for to this accidental meeting, as we usually speak, is to be traced the most of what is deep and painful in this little story. But God overrules all events, and it is abundantly proved, that “ all things shall work together for good, to them that love him.”

From Mary's regular visits to the chateau to carry her morning bunch of flowers, as might have been expected, an intimacy grew up between her and Amelia, for they were nearly of the same age, and had many similar tastes, though Amelia was destitute of that "one thing which is needful."

On the whole, it is better that there should not be too much intimacy between those who from difference of fortune, or other accidental circumstances, are compelled to move in very different spheres. This remark, it is true, applies in a very limited degree to this, our happy country, where there are no privileged orders, and where there ought to be no distinction but that great one which God makes between those who serve and those who serve him not. Still friendships formed between those who in the providence of God are placed under very dissimilar circumstances are not much to be encouraged, and especially when but one of the parties knows and feels the influence of religion. Evil is always more powerful than good example, and there are few who will not be led to envy that which they suppose conducive to the happiness of those who possess all that the world can give.

As the anniversary of Amelia's birthday was drawing near, Mary determined to make her some little rural present, but as to bunches of flowers, she had given so many already, that she wanted to think of something new. During the preceding winter, her father made many work-baskets, all of

superior elegance, but the most beautiful he intended for Mary herself. On it he had worked the design of the village, and for that kind of work it was of remarkable perfection. Mary determined to fill this basket with flowers, and to offer it to the young countess as her birthday present. Her father readily granted his permission, and still more to embellish the beautiful basket, he put Amelia's name in elegant willow-work on one side, and the coat of arms of the count on the other.

The expected day having arrived, early in the morning, Mary gathered the freshest roses, the most beautiful stock-gillyflowers, the richest pinks, and other flowers of the most beautiful colours. She picked out some green branches, full of foliage, and disposed the flowers in the basket, so intermingled with green leaves that all the colours, though perfectly distinct, were yet sweetly and delicately blended. One light garland, composed of rosebuds and moss, was passed around the basket, and the name of Amelia could be distinctly read, inclosed in a coronet of forget-me-nots. The whole appearance of the basket was really of uncommon beauty.

Mary then went to the chateau, with her present, which she offered to the Countess Amelia, adding the best wishes of her heart for her young friend's happiness, both here and hereafter. The young countess was then sitting at her toilet. Behind her was her dressing-maid, busy at a head-

dress for the birthday feast. Amelia received the present with peculiar pleasure; and she could hardly find terms in which to express her delight, as she viewed the charming flowers so tastefully arranged in the basket. "Dear Mary," said she, "you have robbed your garden to make me so rich a present, and as to the basket, I have never seen any thing like it in all my life. Come let us go and show it to my mother." She then took Mary fondly by the hand, and made her goup with her to the apartments of the countess. "See, mother," said Amelia, "if any thing can equal the present I have received from Mary. Never have you seen so beautiful a basket, and nowhere can you find such beautiful flowers." The basket of flowers highly pleased the countess. "In truth," said she, "this basket, with its flowers yet wet with dew, is really charming. It equals the most experienced efforts of the pencil. It does honour to the taste of Mary, but more to the kindness of her heart. Wait a little my child," said she to Mary, while she made a sign to Amelia to follow her into another room.

"Amelia," said the countess, "Mary must not be permitted to go away without some suitable return. What have you to give her?" After a moment's reflection, "I think," said Amelia, "that one of my dresses would be best; for instance, if you will permit me, my dear mother, that which has red and white flowers on a deep green ground. It is

almost new, I have worn it but once. It is a little too short for me, but it will fit Mary exactly, and she can arrange it herself, she is so tasty. If it is not, therefore, too much—”

The countess interrupted her, “ Too much, certainly not. When you wish to give any thing, it ought to be something serviceable. The green robe with the flowers will be very appropriate for Mary.—Go, now, my dear children,” said the countess when they returned, “ take good care of the flowers, lest they fade before dinner. I want the guests to admire the basket also, which will be the most beautiful ornament of the table. Amelia will thank you for your present, dear Mary.”

Amelia ran to her room with Mary, and told her maid to bring the robe. Juliette, (for that was her name), looking at her, said “ Do you wish to wear that robe to-day, Miss?”—“ No,” said Amelia, “ I intend to make it a present to Mary.”—“ Give that dress away !” replied Juliette, “ does your mother know that?”—“ Bring me the robe,” said Amelia, “ and you need give yourself no trouble about the rest.”

Juliette turned herself round that she might hide her spite; and went away, her face burning with anger. She opened the wardrobe with a pull, and took from it the dress of the young countess. “ I wish I was able to tear it to pieces,” said the wicked girl. “ This Mary has already won the good graces of my young mistress, and now, lo !

she steals from me this dress, for it ought to have been mine when Amelia had done with it. I wish I was able to tear out the eyes of this little nose-gay girl. But I will be revenged." What a wicked spirit did Juliette indulge. She ought to have been glad at Mary's good fortune, but Juliette's heart was wrong—she would never listen to religion, and this little circumstance gave her occasion to display her evil temper. Suppressing her anger, however, she returned with a pleasant air, and gave the dress to Amelia.

"Dear Mary," said Amelia, "I have had presents to-day, much more rich than your basket; but none which gave me so much pleasure. The flowers on this robe—receive it as a token of my affection, and carry my best wishes to your good old father." Mary then took the dress, kissed the hand of the young countess, and left the chateau.

Juliette, jealous and enraged, continued her work in silence. It cost her many a struggle before she could finish the head-dress she was preparing; but she could not totally dissemble her wrath. "Are you angry, Juliette?" said the young countess. "I should have been very silly," answered Juliette, "to have been angry because you choose to be generous."—"That is a sensible speech," rejoined Amelia—"I hope you may feel just so reasonable."

Mary ran home full of joy, but her father had

too much prudence to feel any pleasure whatever in such a present. Gay dresses are not appropriate to those who have been taught to consider more of the inward man of the heart, than the outward adorning of the body. "I would much rather, my love," said he, "that you had not carried the basket to the chateau, but it cannot be helped now. This dress is in no sense valuable except as a present from those whom we so highly respect. I fear this will but rouse the jealousy of others, and what is still worse, that it may fill your own heart with vanity. Take care, my dear child, that you run not into the greatest of these two evils. Modesty and good manners are more becoming to a young girl, than the most beautiful and costly garments. Remember the book of God says, it is 'the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit,' which in the sight of God is of great price."

Dear young reader, especially if you are a female, beware of a fondness for dress. Neatness, according to the circumstances in which you are placed, is that which is most consistent with the will of God, and most calculated to gain the real respect of the world. Many a young person has been lost by the indulgence of a taste for dress, and many a young professor of religion has, on this very rock, made shipwreck of the faith.





CHAPTER III.

THE DIAMOND RING LOST,

MARY had scarcely left the castle, when the countess missed her elegant diamond ring, and as no one had been in the room where she had laid it down but Mary, suspicion naturally fell upon her. The young countess Amelia immediately set out for the cottage, in hope that she could induce Mary to restore it, before the knowledge of the theft had been spread abroad.

Little did Mary think when she was trying on the beautiful robe which Amelia had given her, that she was suspected of being a thief, and she was amazed at beholding the young countess enter her little room, pale, trembling, and almost out of breath.

"My dear Mary," said Amelia, "what have you been doing? My mother's diamond ring is lost, and no one was in the chamber but you: give it back quickly, and nothing further will be said."

Mary, as may well be expected, became fright-

ened, and turned pale as death. She declared she had not seen the ring, and that she had not moved from the place where she sat when she went in. But all her declarations could not convince Amelia, and she continued to urge her to give up the ring. She told her that it was worth a thousand dollars, and that she must have taken it. Mary wept bitterly at this suspicion. "Truly," said she, "I have not the ring. I have never ventured to touch that which did not belong to me, much less to steal. My dear father has always taught me better."

At this moment the old man came in—he was at work in the garden when he saw the young countess running with all her might, and he returned to the house to see what was the matter; and when he learned the whole, he was so entirely overcome that he was obliged to seize hold of the corner of a table and sink upon a bench.

"My dear child," said the old man, "to steal a ring of this price is a crime which, in this country, is punished with death. But this is not all—consider the command of God, 'Thou shalt not steal.' One such action not only renders you responsible to men, but to that God who reads the heart, and with whom all false denials amount to nothing. Have you forgotten the holy commandment of God? Have you forgotten my paternal advice? Were you dazzled with the splendour of the gold and the precious stones? Alas! do not deny the

fact, but restore the ring—it is the only reparation you can make."

"Oh, my father," said Mary, weeping and sobbing, "be sure, be very sure, that I have not the ring. If I had even found such a ring in the road, I could not have rested till I restored it to its owner. Indeed I have it not."

"Look at this dear young lady," said the old man, "her affection for you is so great, that she wishes to save you from the hand of justice. Mary, be frank, and do not tell a falsehood."

"My father," said Mary, "you well know that I never in my life stole even a penny, and how should I take anything so valuable! Oh believe me, for I never have told you a lie."

"Mary," again said her father, "see my grey hairs. Oh! do not bring them down with sorrow to the grave. Spare me so great an affliction. Tell me before your Maker, in whose kingdom there is no place for thieves, tell me if you did take the ring."

Mary raised her eyes to heaven, filled with tears, and in the most solemn manner assured her father that she was innocent.

The old man was convinced of the innocence of his daughter. "I do believe you," he cried; "you would not dare to lie in the presence of God, and bere before this young countess and myself. And since I believe you innocent, take comfort and fear nothing. There is nothing to fear on

earth but *sin*. Prison and death are not to be compared to it. Whatever happens then, let us put our trust in God. All will yet come right, for he says, ‘I will make thy righteousness as clear as the light, and thy just dealings as the noonday.’”

“Truly,” said Amelia, “when I hear you speak in this way, I also believe that you have not the ring. But when I examine all the circumstances, how is it possible? My mother knows exactly the place where she put it down; and not a living soul was there but Mary, and as soon as she went out my mother missed the ring. Who then could have taken it?”

“That is impossible for me to say,” replied James. May God prepare us for this severe trial. But whatever happens,” said he, looking up to heaven, “I am ready. Give me but thy grace, O God, it is all I ask.”

“Truly,” said the countess, “I return to the chateau with a heavy heart. This, for me, is but a sad anniversary. My mother as yet has spoken to no one on the subject but myself; but it will not be possible longer to keep the secret. She must wear the ring to-day, for my father whom we expect from court, at noon, will immediately perceive she is without it. He gave it to her the day I was born; and she has never ceased to wear it on each succeeding anniversary. She believes that I will bring it back. Farewell,” continued Amelia.

"I will say that I consider you are innocent; but who will believe me?" She went out overwhelmed with sadness, and her eyes filled with tears.

Mary's father seated himself upon a bench, resting his head on his hand, with his eyes fixed on the earth. The tears chased themselves down his wrinkled cheeks. Mary threw herself at his knees, and said, "O my father, indeed I am innocent of this affair."

He raised himself and looked a long time in her eyes, and then said, "Yes, Mary, you are innocent. That look where integrity and truth are painted, cannot be that of crime."

"O my father," added Mary, "what will be the issue of this? what is it that awaits us? If it but threatens me, I submit without pain; but that you my father, should suffer on my account is an idea to me insupportable."

"Have confidence in God," answered her father. "Take courage; not one hair of our heads can fall to the ground without the permission of the Lord. All that happens to us is the will of God; it will, therefore, be for our advantage, and what can we wish more? Be not terrified, keep to the strictest truth. When they threaten,—when they promise, do not depart from the truth, not even the crossing of a finger; wound not your conscience. A clear conscience is a good pillow, even in a dungeon. Without doubt we shall be separated:—your father will no longer be there to console

you ;—think only to attach yourself more closely to your Father which is in heaven, he is a powerful protector of innocence, and nothing can deprive you of his support.”

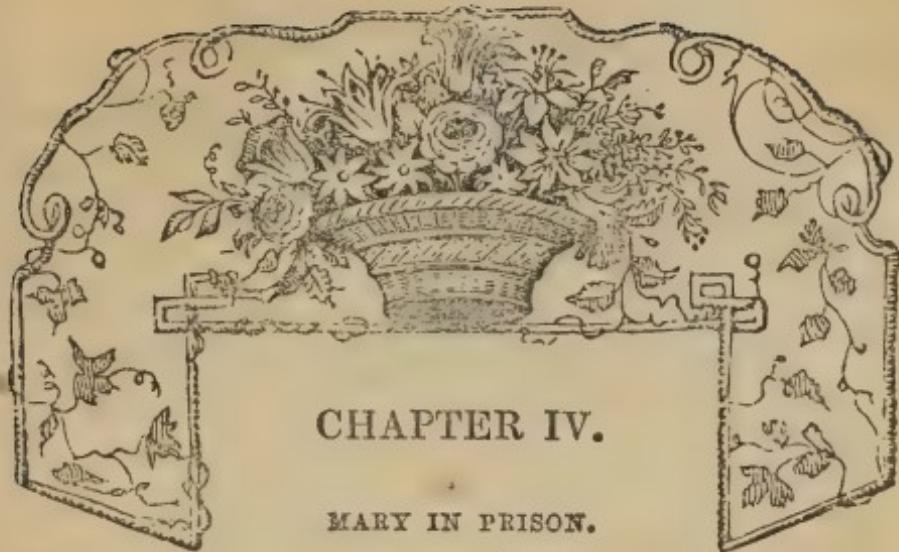
Suddenly the door opened with a noise. The bailiff entered, followed by other officers of justice. Mary uttered a cry, and fell into the arms of her father. “Let them be separated,” cried the officer, his eyes shining with wrath. Let the father be also held in safe guard. Occupy the house and the garden; search everywhere, allow no one to enter until the sheriff has made the inventory.” The officers seized Mary, who clung to her father with all her force, but they tore her from the arms of the old man and chained her. She fainted, and in that state was carried away. When they conducted the father and daughter across the street, a crowd accumulated in their way.—The story of the ring had spread through the whole village; the neighbours pressed around the little cottage of the gardener, as if it had been on fire. People were heard to pronounce judgments the most opposite. Notwithstanding the bounty of Mary and her father towards all, there were some to whom it gave the highest pleasure to exercise the malignity of their language. The comfort which James and Mary had acquired by dint of industry and economy had attracted much envy. “Now,” said some, “we can know where all these good things came from; we were never

able to understand it until the present. If this is the method, it is no great merit to live in abundance, and be better clad than their honest neighbours." Nevertheless, the inhabitants of Eichbourg for the most part, showed a sincere compassion for James and his daughter, and many a father and mother were heard to say,—“Truly the best are liable to fall—who would have believed this of these good people.” Others said, “Perhaps it is not as is thought. May their innocence be made to appear in the day of trial; and when that comes, may God assist them to escape the terrible evils which now threaten them.”

Here and there were seen groups of children weeping. “Alas!” said they, “if they send them to prison, who will give us fruits and flowers!”

There are no circumstances in which the afflicted do not find some to sympathize—But for the most part so “desperately wicked” is the human heart, that we are ready to believe all the ill we hear of others, even without inquiry, and there are few who are willing to stand up the advocates of the distressed. There is but one friend who will never desert those who are unjustly suspected, and it is He of whom it is said—“There is a Friend who sticketh closer than a brother.”





CHAPTER IV.

MARY IN PRISON.

MARY was almost insensible when they took her to prison. When she recovered from her swoon, she wept, sobbed, clasped her hands, and engaged in prayer. At length, overcome with terror, overwhelmed with sadness, and fatigued from having shed so many tears, she threw herself upon her bed of straw, and a sweet sleep soon closed her heavy eyelids. When she awoke it was almost night. The darkness prevented her from distinguishing a single object. It was a long while before she knew where she was. The story of the ring appeared to her as a dream, and at first she thought herself on her own little bed;—she was consoling herself with that idea, when she felt that her hands were chained.—Frightened by the noise of the chains, she jumped from her bed, and all the sad reality burst upon her mind. “What can I do,” said she falling on her knees,—“but raise my heart to God?”

Mary then engaged in prayer. She prayed for herself, but particularly for her dear father, that the Lord would support him in the trouble now brought upon him.

The recollection of her father caused a torrent of tears to flow from her eyes.—Grief and pity stopped her utterance. She continued for a long time thus to cry and sob. The moon, over which until then large clouds had thrown a thick veil, now appeared through a little iron grating, penetrated to the cell, and threw on the floor the shadow of the grating. Mary could easily distinguish by moonlight the four walls of her narrow prison;—the large bricks of which they were constructed;—the white mortar which united the red bricks;—a projection in the wall breast high, placed in a form occupying the place of a table;—the pitcher and clay porringer that were placed there; at last the straw which served her for a bed. From the time that light dissipated the darkness that surrounded Mary, she felt her heart somewhat soothed. Besides this, Mary perceived, with astonishment, that some flowers seemed to shed over her prison their sweet perfume. That morning she had made a bouquet of rose-buds, and other flowers, which remained from the basket,—and had placed them in her bosom. It was they which shed an agreeable odour. She untied the bouquet, and contemplated it by the light of the moon. “Alas!” said she, “when this morning I gathered these

rose-buds in my garden, and these forget-me-nots, who would have thought that the same evening I should be the tenant of this gloomy dungeon? When I wore these garlands, who would have imagined that the same day I should be doomed to bear these iron chains? It is thus that all earthly things are subject to change. It is thus that man never knows in how short a time his position may be entirely changed, and to what unfortunate events his most innocent actions may give occasion. Truly there is need that we should daily commend ourselves to the protection of the Almighty.” She again wept: some tears fell upon her rose-buds, and upon her forget-me-nots. By the light of the moon those tears might have been taken for dew-drops. “He who forgets not to send the rain and dew to moisten the flowers, will not forget me,”—she said, and then the recollection of her father drew tears from her eyes.

“O my dear father,” she said, “while I contemplate this bouquet, how much advice that you have given me concerning flowers presents itself to my memory. From the midst of thorns I have taken these rose-buds. Thus joys will arise to me from the troubles I endure. Had any one attempted prematurely to expand the leaves of this rose-bud, it would have perished. It seems that God with a delicate finger has gradually unfolded this purple cup, and his breath shed over it a sweet perfume. He can disperse the evils which afflict

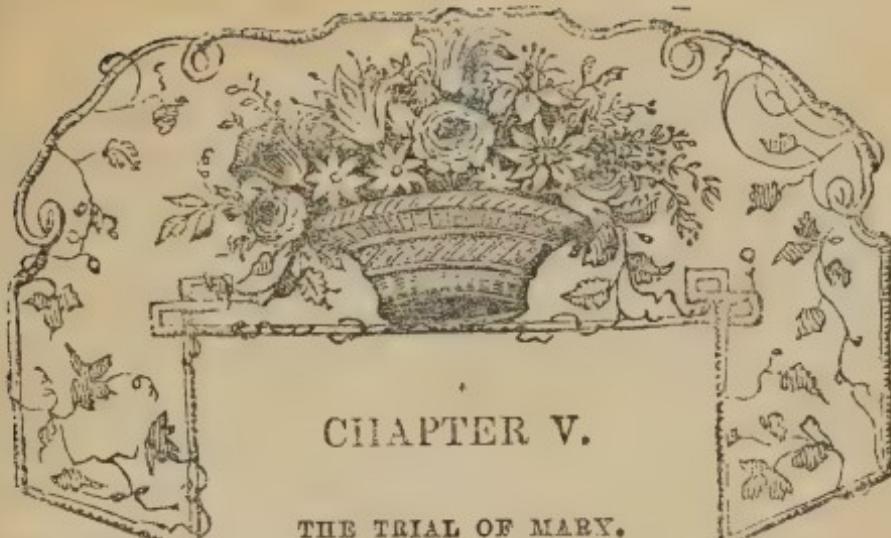
me, and make *that* good which seemed but evil;— I will patiently wait his time. These flowers remind me of him who created them. Yes; I will remember him as he remembered me. These tender flowers! they are blue as the heavens. May heaven be my consolation under all that I suffer upon earth. Here are some sweet peas, with small delicate leaves, half red, half white. This plant grows and winds itself round a support which it needs, that it may not creep in the dust; and there it balances itself above the earth, and displays its flowers, which would be taken for the wings of a butterfly. It is thus that I will cling to God, and by his assistance will raise myself above the dust and miseries of this life. It is particularly this mignonette which diffuses this sweet perfume. Sweet plant, you exhilarate by your odour the one who tore you from the earth. I wish to resemble you, and to shew good even towards those who without any reason, have torn me from my garden, to throw me into this prison. Here is a little sprig of periwinkle, which resists the winter, and preserves its verdure, even in the most rigorous seasons. It is the emblem of hope. I will also preserve hope, now that the time of suffering has come. God who protects the freshness and verdure of this plant from the attacks of winter, of ice, and snow, will support me also from the attacks of adversity. Here again are two leaves of laurel; they remind me of that incorrup-

tible crown, which is reserved in heaven for all those who love the Lord, and have suffered upon earth with submission to his will. It appears to me that I already behold it surrounded with golden rays, an imperishable crown of glory. Flowers of the earth ! you are short-lived as its joys; you fade, you wither in an instant. But in heaven, after the short suffering we experience here below, an unalterable felicity awaits us, and we shall enjoy an eternal glory, if Christ the Saviour is our hope.” Mary consoled herself by thus talking to herself. Suddenly a dark cloud covered the moon. Mary no longer saw her flowers. Dreadful darkness was diffused throughout the prison, and grief re-entered her heart.

But very soon the cloud passed, and the moon re-appeared in her first burst of beauty, “It is thus,” said Mary, “that clouds can be cast over us, but they are dissipated in the end, and we re-appear as brilliant as before. It is thus, if a dark suspicion now tarnishes my character, God will make me triumphant over every false accusation.” Then Mary again stretched herself upon her bundle of straw, and slept with sweet tranquillity. An agreeable dream soothed her heart, and afforded her peace. She dreamed that she walked by moonlight in a little garden quite new to her. It was situated in a wilderness surrounded by a dark forest of oaks, which offered to her the greatest enjoyment. The moon until then had never ap-

peared to her so beautiful nor so brilliant. Illumined by her sweet light, the diversified flowers, ornaments of this little garden, displayed a thousand charms, and filled the air with the most agreeable perfume. She saw her father with her in this wonderful garden. The moon illuminated his venerable and serene countenance, animated by a gracious smile. She ran to him, and shed sweet tears on the old man's bosom, with which her cheeks were wet when she awoke. It was a dream, but it comforted her heart.





CHAPTER V.

THE TRIAL OF MARY.

MARY was scarcely awake, when an officer came to conduct her to the tribunal. She trembled at the sight of the dark room in which the court was held. The judge was seated in a large chair covered with scarlet, and the clerk stood before an enormous table covered with writings. The judge asked Mary a number of questions, and she answered them all as truth required. She wept much, but persisted in declaring her innocence. "Do not attempt to make me believe this," said the judge. "No one but yourself entered the room—no one but you then can have the ring. You had better acknowledge it." "I can never say anything but the truth. I have not seen it,—indeed I have not."

"The ring was seen in your hands,"—continued the judge; "what will you now say?" Mary persisted that the thing was impossible. The judge then rang a little bell, and *Juliette* was brought in.

Juliette, in the fit of jealousy which the dress given to Mary had caused, and in the guilty design of depriving her of the favour of her mistress, had said to the people of the castle that she had seen Mary take it. In consequence of this falsehood, Juliette was summoned as a witness, and lest she should be caught in a lie, she determined to maintain it, even in a court of justice. When she was summoned, and the judge required her to declare the truth before God, she felt her heart beat quickly, and her knees trembled under her. But this wicked girl listened neither to the voice of the judge, nor that of her conscience. "If," said she to herself, "I acknowledge now that I have lied, then I shall be driven away, or perhaps be imprisoned." She persisted in her imposture, and addressing herself to Mary,—she said, with effrontery, "You have the ring; I saw you with it." Mary heard this calumny with horror, but she did not suffer passion to get the better of her judgment. She could not, however, refrain from weeping,—and her tears almost choaked her utterance. "It is not true,—you did not see me with the ring. How can you assert so terrible a falsehood, and thus cause my ruin without my having ever injured you?" But Juliette, who considered her own temporal interest, and felt nothing but hatred and jealousy towards Mary, remained insensible. She repeated her falsehood with aggravated circumstances and details, and then was dismissed

by the judge. "Mary, you are convicted," said he. "Every circumstance is against you. The chambermaid of the young countess has seen the ring in your hands;—tell me, now, what you have done with it." Mary still asserted that she had it not. According to the cruel custom of those days, the judge had her whipped *until the blood came*, in hopes that she would confess.

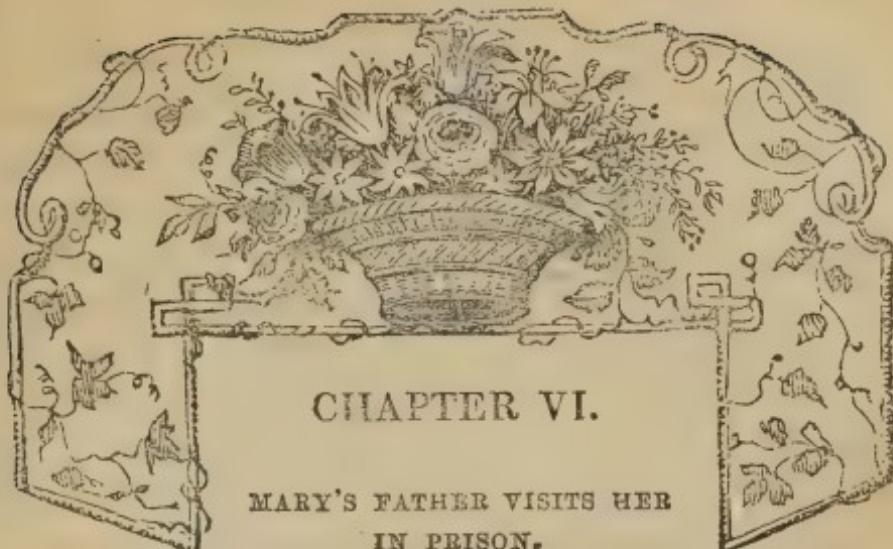
Mary screamed, and wept, and continued to repeat that she was innocent, but in vain. Pale, trembling, and torn with blows, she was again thrown into prison. Her wounds gave her great pain. Stretched on a bed of straw extremely hard, she passed half the night without sleep. She wept, groaned, prayed to God, who at last sent her a sweet and soothing sleep. The next day the judge had her brought again before his tribunal. As severity had answered no purpose, he endeavoured to draw from her an acknowledgment by mildness and flattering promises. "You have incurred the penalty of death, you have deserved to perish by the sword of justice; but confess where the ring is, and nothing will be done to you.—Consider it well, the choice is between life and death."

Still Mary stood to her first assertion.—The judge, who had remarked how much she loved her father, added, "If you persist in concealing the truth, if you will not spare your own life, spare at least that of your aged father; would you see his

head, whitened by age, cut off by the hand of the executioner? Who but he could have induced you to tell a falsehood with so much obstinacy? Are you ignorant that his life as well as yours is at stake?" Terrified at this threat, Mary nearly fainted. "Confess," said the judge,—"that you have taken the ring. A single word, a syllable—only say Yes—and you save your life, and that of your father."

This temptation was great, and for some time Mary was silent. It was a moment of dreadful trial. Satan suggested that she could say, "I took the ring, but I lost it on the road." "No," she thought, afterward,—"no!—it is better to adhere to the truth. It is a sin to lie. Let it cost me what it will, I will not depart from the truth, even to save my own or my father's life. I will obey God, and trust him for the rest." She then answered in a loud but tremulous voice, "If I say I had the ring, it would be a lie, and though this falsehood should save my life, I would not utter it. But," continued she, "If blood must be shed, spare at least the white hairs of my virtuous father. I should be most happy to shed my blood for him."

These words touched the hearts of the whole body of the bystanders. The judge himself, with all his severity, could not help being moved: he remained silent, and made a sign for Mary to be taken back to prison.



CHAPTER VI.

MARY'S FATHER VISITS HER
IN PRISON.

HE judge found himself in great difficulty in coming to a decision. "To-day is the third day," said he, "and we have not advanced any further than the first hour. If I foresaw any possibility that the ring was in other hands, I should believe this young girl innocent. But all the circumstances are too clearly laid down against her. It is impossible that it can be otherwise. She must have stolen the ring." He returned to the countess, and again questioned her as to the most minute circumstances; Juliette was also examined again: he passed the whole day in reviewing the testimony; and weighed each word that Mary uttered in her examination. In short, it was already very late when he sent to the prison for Mary's father to be brought to his house. "James," said he, "I am known to be a rigid man—but you cannot reproach me of having ever intentionally

injured any one. You will believe, I hope, that I do not desire the death of your daughter: nevertheless, all the circumstances prove that she must have committed the theft, and the law requires her death. The testimony of Juliette gives full evidence of the fact. Notwithstanding, if the ring was returned, and the damage thus repaired, we might grant Mary a pardon in consideration of her youth. But if she still persists with so much obstinacy in her guilty denial, this excess of perverseness must ruin her. Go to her James,—insist upon her returning the ring, and I pledge my word, that then, and only then,—she will not abide the penalty of death: but will be discharged with but a trifling punishment. You are her father, and have unbounded power over her. If you obtain nothing, what must be the conclusion but that you are an accomplice, and have participated in the crime? And I repeat it, if the ring is not found, I pity your case.” “I will speak as you desire to my daughter,” answered James, “but that she has not stolen the ring, and that she will not acknowledge herself guilty, I know beforehand, although I will employ every means of finding it out; and if it is that she perish, notwithstanding her innocence, it is a favour that I can behold her once more before the dreadful event.”

An officer was sent with the old man to the prison of Mary :—he set the smoking lamp upon the little projection of the wall which was in one

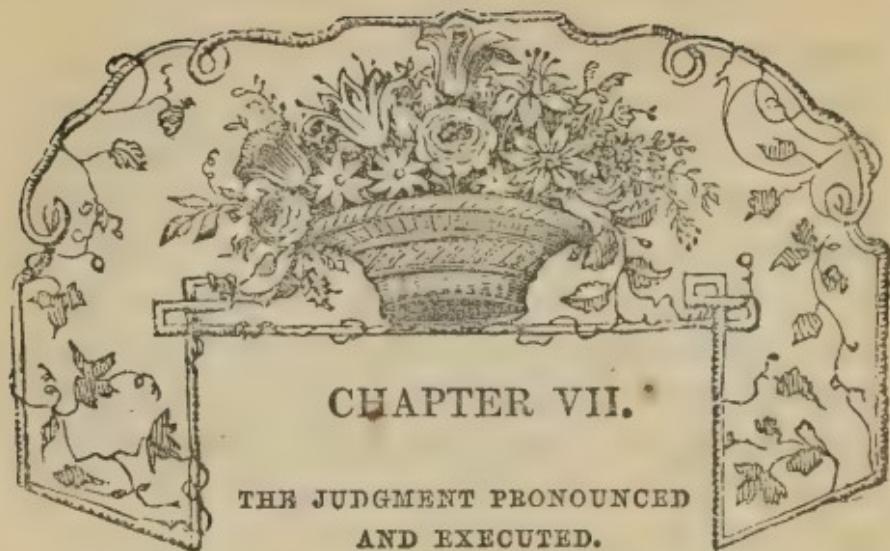
corner of her cell,—and upon which was an earthen pitcher full of water. The poor girl as yet had eaten nothing. She was lying on the straw, and with her face turned towards the wall, and was dozing, but scarcely had she opened her eyes and perceived the pale light of a lamp, than she turned over, and seeing her father, uttered a cry of joy, and raised herself with a precipitation which caused her chains to resound. Then nearly fainting, she threw herself upon his neck. The old man sat down with her upon her bed, and pressed her in his arms; both remained for some time silent, and mingled their tears together. James broke silence, and began to speak as his commission required. “Ah! my father,” said Mary, interrupting him, “you at least cannot doubt of my innocence. Alas,” continued she, still weeping, “is there no one but what thinks me guilty; no one, not even my father? Believe, dear father, that I am innocent.” “Be composed my dear child, I do believe you.—What I have done is in compliance with the order I received.” They again remained silent. James looked at Mary, and saw her cheeks were pale and hollow with grief; her eyes red, and swelled with weeping; her hair floated in disorder. “Poor child,” said he, “God has put thee to a severe trial, but I very much fear the most cruel, the most dreadful sufferings are yet to come. Alas! perhaps the head of my dear child will fall by the hand of the executioner.” “Ah, my father,”

said Mary,—“I care but little for myself. But you.”—“Fear nothing for me, my dear child,” said the father, “I run no risk.”—“Oh,” cried Mary, transported with joy, and without allowing her father time to finish, “if that is the case, my heart is relieved of a great weight: all is well: my father be assured I fear not death. I shall find my God,—my Saviour,—and I shall see my mother also in heaven. Oh! what a happiness will this be.”

These words made a deep impression on the heart of the old man, and he wept like a child. “Well, God be praised,” said he, clasping his hands, “God be praised for the submissive disposition I find you in.—It is hard, without doubt, very hard, for a man bowed down with the weight of years, for a tender father thus to lose his only child, the child of his love, and his only consolation;—his last support, and the joy of his old age. However,” continued he, in a broken voice, “may the will of the Lord be done.” A torrent of tears interrupted these words. “Yet one word,” said he, a moment after: “Juliette has deposed against you. She has declared on her oath, to have seen the ring in your hands. It is her testimony that condemns you, if you are to perish. But you pardon her? Is it not so? You do not take with you any feeling of hatred? Alas! even upon this bed of straw, in the bottom of this dark cell, loaded with heavy chains, you are still more hap-

py than she in the palace of her master, clothed with silk and lace, and surrounded with attention. It is better to die innocent than to live dishonoured. Pardon her, Mary, as thy Saviour pardoned his enemies; do you pardon her?" Mary assured him that she did. "Well," said her father, who heard the officer coming to separate them, "I recommend you to God and his grace, and if you are not to see me again,—if this is the last time I am permitted to hold converse with you, my daughter: at least, I will not be long in following you to heaven; for I feel that I shall not survive this parting." The officer warned the old man that it was necessary to depart. Mary wished to retain him, and held him in her arms with all her strength;—but her father was obliged to disengage himself as gently as he could, and Mary fell insensible on her bed. James was brought again before the judge. As soon as he entered, he raised his hands to heaven, and cried out, almost beside himself, "She is innocent." "I am disposed," said the judge, "to believe it;—but unfortunately I cannot judge from your testimony,—nor that of your daughter. I must pronounce sentence from the nature of the testimony, and according to what is prescribed, even to the utmost rigour of the law."





CHAPTER VII.

THE JUDGMENT PRONOUNCED
AND EXECUTED.

So may well be imagined, all were curious to know what would be the issue of this unfortunate affair in which Mary was involved. Every well disposed person trembled for her life, for at this time the crime of theft was punished with rigour, and the penalty of death was often inflicted for the theft of a sum not equal to the twentieth part of the value of the ring. The count wished for nothing so much as to find Mary innocent. He himself read all the testimony, and conversed for hours at a time with the judge, without being able to convince himself of Mary's innocence. The two countesses, the mother and daughter, begged with tears in their eyes,—that Mary should not suffer death, while her aged father spent days and nights, supplicating, unceasingly, the Lord; that he would be pleased to convince the world of the innocence of his daughter.

Whenever Mary heard the officer enter with his

keys, she thought that they were going to announce to her the time of her death. Meantime the executioner was engaged in preparation for the punishment.—Juliette, in walking, saw him engaged in this work; and her heart was overwhelmed with grief. Horror seemed to deprive her of her presence of mind; and when she sat down to supper, she could not touch any thing, and every one saw that she was not in her ordinary spirits. She went to bed, but her sleep was disturbed, and more than once in her dreams she saw the bloody head of Mary. Her remorse gave her no rest, neither day nor night, but the heart of this wicked creature was too hardened to confess her falsehoods, and she was determined not to repair her fault, by a sincere acknowledgment.

At length the judge pronounced the sentence. In consideration of Mary's extreme youth, and (until now,) unblemished reputation, the sentence of death was changed to that of banishment of herself and father, for he considered her father, whether by the act, or whether by the bad education he had given her, had rendered himself an accomplice of her crime. Their possessions were to be sold, to contribute as far as they could, to the reparation of the loss which the count had sustained, and to pay the expenses of the court. This sentence was to be carried into execution the next morning at the break of day.

Mary and her father passed before the castle

gate, conducted by an officer, when Juliette came out. Seeing that the affair, contrary to all expectation, had taken a different turn from what she anticipated, this cunning girl, destitute of every good sentiment, regained her gaiety. She had now accomplished exactly what she wanted. She always feared, that in the end Mary would supplant her. This fear was dissipated. Her first aversion against James's daughter revived, and she rejoiced at her misfortune;—in fact, her bad heart had gained the ascendancy. The countess, seeing Mary's basket on the sideboard, had said to Juliette, "Take away that basket, that I may never have it before my eyes. It arouses in me recollections so painful that I cannot behold it but with grief." Juliette had taken it, and was going away with it under her arm—"Stop" said she, "here's your present, you can take it again; my mistress wishes nothing from such people as you. Your glory has passed away with the flowers for which you were so well paid, and it is a great pleasure for me to give you your packages."

She threw the basket at Mary's feet, re-entered the castle with a scornful smile, and shut the door with great violence after her. Mary took the basket in silence, with tears in her eyes, and continued her way. Her father had not even a cane to support his tottering steps. Mary possessed nothing but the basket; she turned more than a hundred times, her eyes wet with tears, towards

her paternal roof; until the roof, the castle, and even the steeple of the church were hidden by a hill covered with trees,—and disappeared from her sight. When the officer had conducted them to the limits of the county, considerably advanced in the forest, the old man, overwhelmed with anxiety and grief, seated himself upon the moss under the shade of an aged oak.—“Come, my daughter,” said he, and as he spoke, he took Mary in his arms, joined her hands in his, and raising them to heaven, said, “Before we go on let us thank God, who has taken us from a narrow and obscure prison, and who allows us to enjoy freely the sight of heaven and the freshness of the air—that God who has saved our lives, and who has returned you, my dear child, to the embraces of your father.” The aged man then fell on his knees, and with a deep gratitude of heart, commended them both to the protection of their heavenly Father. After they had prayed thus together, (for Mary repeated from the bottom of her heart every word which her father had uttered,) they felt a wonderful consolation; and a feeling of courage and extraordinary joy was shed over their hearts. At that moment God’s providence began to favour them. Anthony, an old huntsman, with whom James had been in service when he accompanied the count in his travels, had set out before day-break to hunt a stag. “God bless you, James,” said he, “it does me good to hear your voice; I

am not then mistaken, it is true that they have banished you, but it is hard to see oneself obliged in one's old days, to quit one's country."

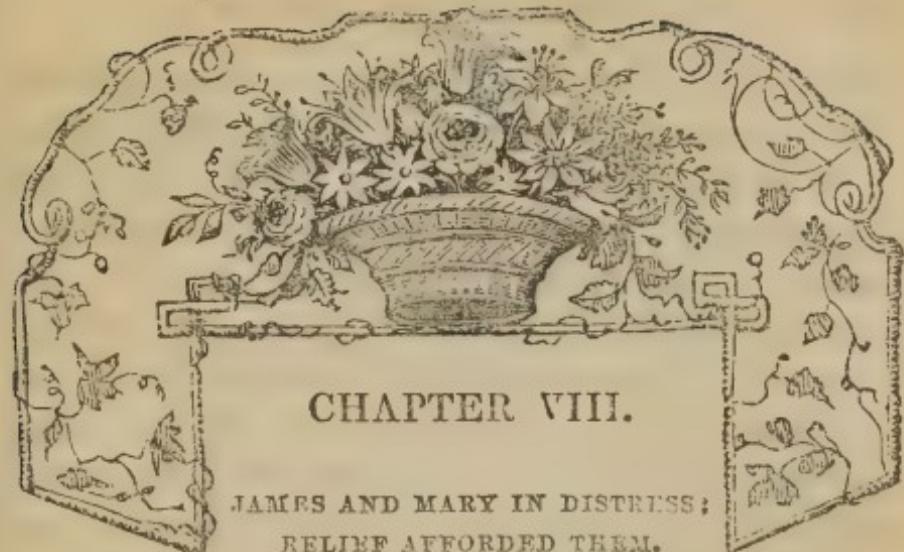
"As far as the arch of heaven extends," answered James, "The earth is the Lord's, and everywhere the watchful kindness of the Lord is upon us. Our country is in heaven."—"Tell me," answered the huntsman, in an accent of pity, "have they banished you just as you are, without giving you the necessary clothing for such a journey?" "He who clothes the flowers of the field will know how to provide for us also," answered James. "Even so—you are supplied at least with money?" said the kind-hearted huntsman. "We have a good conscience, and with that we are richer than if the stone upon which I sit was gold. My father was a basket maker, and he taught me his trade besides that of gardening, in order that during the winter I might have a useful occupation. This has done more for me, and has provided better for my future prosperity,—than if he had left me three thousands crowns. A good conscience,—health of body, and an honourable trade, are the best and surest fortune that we can have on earth." "God be praised," answered the huntsman, "that you can bear your misfortunes so well. I am forced to confess that you are right. It seems to me, that you have yet a good resource in gardening: but where will you get employment?"—"Very far," answered James, "where

we are not known, where God will conduct us.” “James,” said the huntsman, “take this knotty cane: I supplied myself with it to assist me in climbing up the mountain, but I can get another, and here,” continued he, drawing from his pocket a little leather purse, “in it is some money, that I received in payment for some wood in the hamlet, where I passed the night.”

“The cane I accept, and I will keep it in remembrance of a generous man, but as for the money, it is impossible for me to accept it: it is a payment for wood, and it belongs to the count.” “Good old James,” said he, “do not trouble yourself about that, the count has already received his money.—Some years past, a poor old man who had lost his cow, could not pay for the wood which he had bought. I advanced him the sum, and thought no more of it. Now he has extricated himself from his difficulties, and yesterday, at the moment when I least expected it,—he returned it to me with thanks. It is truly a present which God sends you.” “Well,” said James, “I accept it, and may God return it to you. See, Mary, with what goodness God provides for us even in the commencement of our dreary banishment. We have not as yet passed the limits of the county, and see, he sends us our good old friend, who has offered me a travelling cane, and who has given us money. I had not time to quit this seat before heaven heard my prayer. So, my daughter, cour-

age ; God will watch over us." The old huntsman melted into tears, then took leave of them. " Farewell, honest James," said he ; " farewell, good Mary," extending his hand to both,— " I always thought you innocent, and think so still. Do not despair :—do not let your probity fail you; yes ! yes ! whosoever does well, and has confidence in God, may calculate on divine protection. May God be with you." The huntsman left them, and bent his steps towards Eichbourg. James got up, took his daughter by the hand, and they continued their way across the forest, not knowing at what spot they would stop, for they had now no friend but God.





CHAPTER VIII.

JAMES AND MARY IN DISTRESS;
RELIEF AFFORDED THEM.

MARY and her father still continued their painful journey, and had already walked more than twenty miles without being able to find a night's lodging. The little money which they had was nearly exhausted, and they knew not where to obtain subsistence. It cost them a great trial to solicit charity, but they were obliged to submit to it.—They presented themselves before a great number of doors, but they scarcely met with any thing but repulses, accompanied by abuse. Sometimes they could only get a little piece of dry bread, and some water from the nearest fountain. Sometimes, indeed, they received a little soup, or some greens, and here and there some remains of meat or pastry. After having passed several days in this manner, they were very glad to be allowed to sleep in a barn.

One day the road appeared endless, as they travelled between hills and mountains covered with

trees, and they had walked a long time without seeing any village, when the old man began to feel very weak. He fell, pale and speechless, at the foot of a hill covered with pines, on a heap of dried leaves. Mary was overcome with fear and anxiety, and overwhelmed with grief. In vain did she seek a little fresh water in the neighbourhood, she could not find the least drop : in vain did she cry for assistance, the echo alone answered her. On whatever side she looked, no house was to be seen. Although almost worn out with fatigue, she ran to the top of the hill in hopes of having a better view of the surrounding country. At last, she discovered behind the hill, and quite at its foot, a cottage surrounded by rich fields, and green meadows, and completely shut in by the forest. She ran down, and arrived quite out of breath at this hut. With tears in her eyes, she asked assistance in a broken voice. By God's providence both the peasant and his wife, who were advanced in years, were kind-hearted people. The paleness, and tears, and agony of the poor girl touched their sensibility.

"Put a horse to the little waggon," said the farmer's wife to her husband, "we will bring this sick old man here." The farmer went out to get his horse and to harness it ; and his wife took two mattresses, an earthen pitcher of fresh water, and a bottle of vinegar. As soon as Mary knew that the waggon would be obliged to go round the hill, and that it was a good half hour's ride, she went before

with the water and vinegar, the same path by which she had come, and by this means arrived sooner where she had left her father. He had recovered a little, and was sitting at the foot of a pine tree, and it was with great joy that he saw the return of his daughter, whose absence had caused him some anxiety. As soon as the farmer and his wife arrived, they placed him in the waggon, and carried him to the farm, where they gave him a neat little room, a closet, and a kitchen, which were then unoccupied. The farmer's wife made him a nice bed, and a bench was sufficient for Mary, who would not quit her father's pillow. The indisposition of James was but a weakness occasioned by bad food, bad rest, and the fatigue of the journey. The good farmer's wife spared nothing to relieve the sick man, and even sacrificed some of their usual gratifications. These kind people had been in the habit of going every year to a fair in the neighbouring village, but they agreed this time to remain at home, and to employ the money which they would have spent, in procuring medicines and delicacies for the invalid. Mary thanked them with tears in her eyes. "Oh! then," said she,—"there are kind people everywhere, and it is often in the most unlikely places that we find the most compassionate hearts." As the old man grew better, Mary was constantly seated beside her father's bed, but she did not sit there idle—she had not her match for knitting and sewing, and in these employments

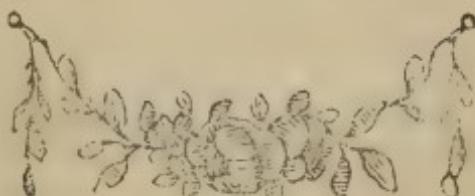
she occupied herself with great industry for the farmer's household. She did not give herself a moment's rest. The farmer's wife was enchanted with her taste for work, and her modest and reserved demeanour. By the great care which they had taken of James, and by the excellent food which they had given him, he was so far restored, as to be able to sit up, and as idleness had always been insupportable in him, he began again to resume his basket-making. Mary, as before, gathered for him branches of willow and hazel twigs, and his first production was a pretty little convenient basket, which he offered to the farmer's wife as a token of gratitude.

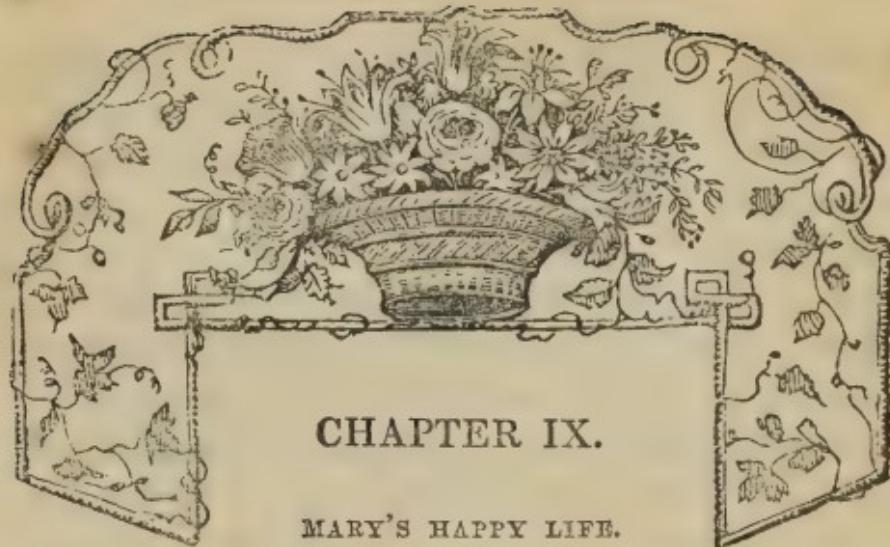
He had exactly guessed her taste. The basket was elegant, but strong and solid;—branches of willow, stained with a deep red, and interwoven in the cover, which formed the initials of the farmer's wife, and the date. The border was formed of green, brown, and yellow branches, representing a cottage thatched with straw, on each side of which was a pine tree. This pretty basket was the admiration of the whole house. The farmer's wife received the present with great joy, and the allusion made to her farm, which was called the "Pine Cottage," gave her peculiar pleasure. When James felt himself quite recovered, he said to his hosts, "We have been long enough a burden to you—it is time I should go and seek my fortune elsewhere." "What is the matter with you, my good

James?" said the farmer, taking him by the hand—"I hope we have not offended you. Why then would you wish to leave us? The year is very far advanced. Do you not see the leaves on the trees, how yellow they are turning? Winter is at our doors. Do you wish to be sick again?" James assured them that he had no other motive for leaving them, than the fear of being troublesome.

"Troublesome, indeed," said the farmer, "don't distress yourself about that—in the little room where you are, you cannot incommod us in any way, and you gain enough to supply your wants."—"Yes, yes," added the farmer's wife, "Mary alone earns enough with her needle and her knitting, and you, James, if you wish to continue to exercise the trade of basket-maker, be easy. Not long since, when I went to the pine mill, I took with me your pretty basket. All the countrywomen that were there wished to have one like it. I will undertake to procure customers. You will not soon be in want of work."

James and Mary consented to remain, and their hosts expressed a sincere pleasure at this determination.





CHAPTER IX.

MARY'S HAPPY LIFE.

JAMES and Mary then fixed themselves in their habitation, their rooms furnished in the most simple style, and only with what was necessary. Mary thought herself very happy in being again able to prepare the repast of her father, and they led together a life of contentment. While James was making baskets, and Mary was occupied with knitting and sewing, they amused each other with familiar conversation. Sometimes they spent their winter evening in the front room, and it was with great pleasure that their hosts, with other inmates of the house, listened to the judicious reflections and instructive recitals of Father James, as they called him. Winter, with all its severity, passed with them in the most agreeable manner. Quite near their house was a large garden, which was not the best kept in the world; the farmer and his wife had too much to do in the field to give gardening the necessary time, and besides it was an

art with which they were not familiar. James undertook to make of it a pretty flower garden.

He had made his preparations during the autumn, and scarcely had the warmth of spring dissipated the winter's snow when he began his work, assisted by Mary, and they were employed from morning until quite late in the evening. The garden was divided into compartments; the beds planted with all sorts of vegetables, and bordered with gravel walks. Mary had no rest until her father brought from the village, (where he was in the habit of buying the seeds of vegetables,) rose-trees, tulip and lily roots, and various kinds of garden shrubbery. She cultivated the most beautiful flowers, and among them were some which had never been seen in this deserted and isolated place. The garden soon exhibited such a burst of verdure and richness, that the valley, until now overgrown with dark forest-trees, assumed quite a smiling appearance. The neighbouring orchard also appeared to thrive much better under James's hand, and brought forth fruit in great abundance.

The blessing of heaven was upon every thing he undertook. The old gardener had regained his good humour; he began again to make his remarks on the flowers, but without recurring to his old observation, he had always something new to say. During the first spring-days, Mary had sought for violets along the thicket which bordered their rustic ground. She wished, as usual, to offer the

first bunch of them to her father. At last, she found some beautiful ones which had a delightful perfume, and ran, transported with joy, to present them to him. "Very well," said her father, "seek, and ye shall find: but listen," continued he; "It is to be remarked that these charming flowers, these beautiful flowers, delight to grow among brambles, and it is here we can find a lesson for ourselves. Who would have thought that in coming to this dark valley, all covered with woods, and this thatched cottage, that we should here find happiness? Well, so it is,—there is no situation in life so thorny but that we may therein discover a peaceful happiness hid among the thorns. Have always, my child, a firm trust in God, and to whatever adversity you may be exposed, inward peace will never forsake you." One day the wife of one of the villagers came from the city to buy some flax of the farmer, and brought her little boy with her. While she was engaged in examining the flax, in choosing and bargaining, the child having found the garden-gate open, had gone in, and began immediately to plunder a full-blown rose-bush, but he scratched himself terribly with the thorns. The mother and the farmer's wife ran to him as soon as they heard his cries. James and Mary ran also. The child, with his little hands all bloody, exclaimed against the rose-bush for having deceived him by its pretty flowers. "It is sometimes thus with us big children also," said James. "There is no pleasure which

has not its thorns as well as this rose. We run towards it, as if to seize it with both hands. One is led away by a taste for dancing or for play. Another by a taste for drink, or other vices still more shameful. Then we begin to lament, and to detest pleasure. Do not let us then be foolishly dazzled by the show of fine roses. Man is endowed with a soul to save; it is not then necessary that we should blindly abandon ourselves to our propensities. We ought, without ceasing, to use all diligence to gain eternal life."

One beautiful morning which succeeded a two-day's rain, Mary and her father went into the garden, and found the first lilies in bloom, diffusing all their charms and all their magnificence in the rays of the rising sun. Mary called all the people of the house, who for a long time had been very anxious to see the lilies in bloom. They were in an ecstasy of admiration. "What purity! what whiteness! such neatness entirely without blemish, not a spot!"—"No, not one," said James, agitated, "and could it please heaven that the conscience of men were as exempt, it would be a pleasing sight for men and angels. A pure heart can only claim connection with heaven. How straight is the stem; how gracefully and nobly it raises itself, as a finger that points to heaven," added James. "I am happy to see this flower in the garden. There ought not to be a garden in the country where the lily is not

found. Inclined as we are continually to lean towards earth, we are prompted to forget heaven. The lily, which is so upright, seems to teach us, that in the midst of our troubles and labours, we should raise our thoughts towards the celestial kingdom, and aspire to something better than the productions of earth. Every plant," continued he, earnestly, and with a penetrating look, "even the most delicate herbs, have a tendency to raise themselves, and if there are any too weak for self-support, as are these beans, and this hop, which we see in the midst of this hedge, it entwines itself and clammers around this pole. It is unworthy of man that he alone in his desires and his hopes should wish to grovel for ever in the earth."

James was one day employed in placing young plants in a new-made bed—Mary was weeding at a little distance from him. "This double labour," said the father, "should be the only occupation of all our life. Our heart is a garden which the good God has given us to cultivate. It is necessary that we should unceasingly apply ourselves to the cultivation of the good, and the extraction of the evil which might there take root. Otherwise it is but uncultivated ground. But let us scrupulously fulfil these two duties, and to this end let us implore the assistance and blessing of that God who makes the sun to shine, the dew and rain to fall, the plants to grow, and the fruit to ripen. Then will our hearts be a most deli-

cious garden, and we shall possess a paradise within ourselves." It was thus that James and Mary led an active and industrious life, mingling their instructive conversations with their innocent pleasures. Three springs and three summers had glided away, and the happy days they had spent at the Pine Cottage had almost caused them to forget their past misfortunes. But at the return of autumn, they saw their chrysanthemums displaying their red and blue flowers, the last ornaments of the garden. The leaves of the trees were clothed in variegated shades, and the garden was preparing for repose during the winter. James felt sensibly the diminution of his strength, and felt more than once very uncomfortable. He however concealed his feelings from Mary, fearing to distress her; but all his observations on the flowers were of a melancholy cast, and Mary, who observed it, felt it from the bottom of her heart. One day she observed a rose which appeared to be waiting until autumn to bloom. She wished to gather it, but the leaves of the fading flower fell off in her hand. "So it is with man," said her father, "In youth, we resemble a rose newly opened, but our life fades as the rose: scarcely is it matured ere it is passed. Pride not yourself, my dear child, upon the beauty of the body, it is vain and fragile, aspire to the beauty of the soul, and piety which will never wither." One day, towards evening, James ascended a ladder to ga-

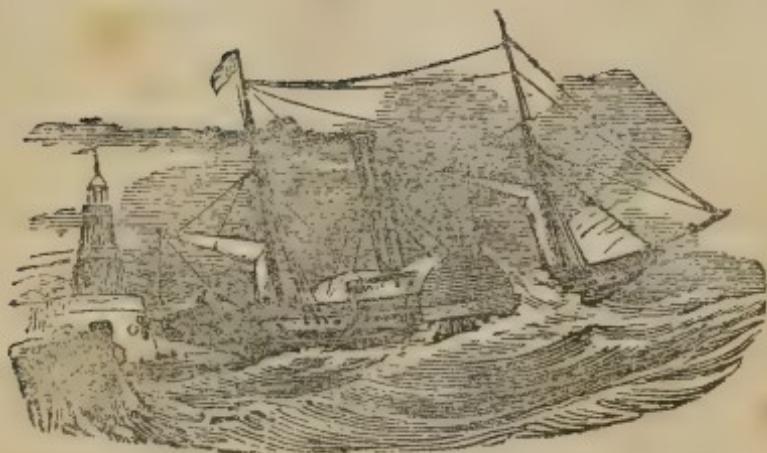
ther some apples. He handed them to Mary, who arranged them in a basket. "How cold," said he, "this autumn wind is which whistles over this stubble field; how it plays with the yellow leaves and my white hairs. I am in my autumn, my dear Mary, and soon you will be too. Try to resemble this excellent tree, which produces fruit so beautiful, and in so great abundance. Try to please the Master of this great garden,—which is called the world." Mary was sowing seed for the following spring. "One day will come," said the old man, "when they will put us in the ground as you are putting those seeds; it will cover us. But console yourself, my dear Mary, soon the grain is enveloped in the air: when it is animated, if I may so speak, it sprouts from the earth in form of a beautiful flower, and raises itself triumphantly from the place where it was buried. We also shall rise one day from our tombs with splendour and magnificence. Think of the future, my dear Mary, when you will follow me to the tomb. In the flowers which you will undoubtedly plant on my tomb, see the image of the resurrection and immortal life."

"What is this BODY?—Fragile, frail
As vegetation's tenderest leaf—
Transient as April's fitful gale,
And as the flashing meteor brief

"What is this SOUL?—Eternal mind,
Unlimited as thought's vast range—
By grovelling matter unconfined;
The same, while states and empires change.

"When long this miserable frame
Has vanished from life's busy scene,
This earth shall roll, that sun shall flame,
As though **THIS DUST** had never been.

"When suns have waned, and worlds sublime
Their final revolutions told,
This **SOUL** shall triumph over time,
As though such orbs had never rolled."





CHAPTER X.

MARY'S FATHER TAKEN SICK.

NT the beginning of the winter which threatened to be very severe, and which had already covered the mountain and valley with a very deep snow, old father James was taken sick. Mary begged him to allow the physician of the neighbouring village to come and see him; and immediately the farmer, who was always on the alert, went for him in a sleigh. The physician wrote his prescription, and Mary walked with him as far as the door, to ask him if he had any hope of her father's recovery. The physician answered that he was in no immediate danger, but that his disease would become a consumption, and that, especially at his age, he could not be expected to recover. At this intelligence Mary nearly fainted. She wept, she sobbed, and could hardly be comforted. However, she wiped her tears, and endeavoured to appear calm before she went to her father, for fear of distressing him. Mary attended her father with all the care that a good daughter

could bestow on a most beloved parent. She could read in his eyes all that he wanted. She watched whole nights near his bed. Did any wish to relieve her for fear she herself would be sick, and if she, after much persuasion, consented to rest for a few moments on her bench, it happened very rarely that she ever closed her eyes. If her father coughed, she trembled; if he made the least stir, she immediately approached him softly and on tip-toe to know how he was. She prepared and brought to him with the most delicate attention the food which best suited his situation. She arranged his pillow, read to him, and prayed with him continually. Often when he dozed for a little while, she would stand by his bed with her hands clasped and her tearful eyes raised to heaven.

Mary had a little money which she had saved from the work of her own hands. It was the little she had earned in spending very often half the night in sewing and knitting. This she made use of to the very last penny in procuring for her father all that she thought would be of any service. The pious old man, although he felt himself occasionally a little stronger, was only too sure that he was on his death-bed. But he was calm and perfectly resigned. He spoke of his approaching death with the greatest serenity. "Ah!" said Mary, crying bitterly, "do not speak thus, my dear father. I cannot bear the thought. What will become of me? Alas! your poor Mary will

no longer have any one upon earth."—"Do not cry, my dear child," said her father, holding out his hand to her. "You have a kind Father in heaven. He will never forsake you, although your earthly father be taken away from you. I do not feel the least anxious about the manner in which you will gain a livelihood; no, that distresses me the least. The birds easily find their food. Will you not then find enough to nourish you? God provides for the smallest sparrow; why will he not also provide for you? It is quite another thing which distresses me," continued he; "it is that you will be left in a wicked world. Alas! my dear child, you do not suspect the world of being half so wicked or corrupted as it is, or of containing half so many wicked people as it does. There will be moments when you will feel inclined to do evil,—moments when you will allow yourself, perhaps, to be persuaded, without much difficulty, that sin is not so very wrong. Listen to the advice which I now give you, and let the last words of your dying father be for ever deeply impressed on your heart. Forbid every action, every speech, every thought for which you would have to blush if your father knew it. Soon my eyes will be for ever closed. I shall no longer be here to watch over you. But remember you have in heaven a Father whose eye sees everything, and reads the bottom of your heart." After a little while, when he had taken breath, he continued,

" You would not wish to afflict, by a bad action, the father whom you have on earth ; how much more then should you fear to offend that Father who is in heaven. Look at me once more, Mary. Oh, if you ever feel the least inclination to do wrong, think of my pale face, and of the tears which wet my sunken cheeks. Come to me, put your hand into mine, cold and withered, which will soon fall into the dust. Promise me never to forget my words. In the hour of temptation, imagine you feel this cold hand which you now hold on the border of the grave. Poor child, you cannot see, without weeping, my pale and hollow cheeks. Ah ! know that everything passes away in this world. There was a time when I had the bloom of health, and the fresh and vermillion tint which you now have. The time will come when you too will be stretched on your bed of death, pale and emaciated as you now see me, if God does not sooner take you to himself. The friends of my youth have disappeared like the flowers which have passed away with spring, and for whose place you seek in vain, like the dew which but for a moment sparkles on the flowers, and is gone." The next day James, believing that his end was near, though weak, yet felt it his duty and delight to continue his dying advice. " I have seen the world," said he, " as well as other people, when I accompanied the young Count in his travels. Was there anything in the large cities superb or magnificent,

I went there. I spent whole weeks in pleasure. Was there a brilliant assembly, or a lively conversation, I saw and heard all, as well as my young master. I always had my share in the most exquisite meals, and of the rarest wines, and always had more than I wished for. But all these noisy pleasures left me with an empty heart. I here protest solemnly, that a few moments of peaceful contemplation and fervent prayer under our harbour in Eichbourg, or under this thatch that covers us now, gave me more real joy than all—even on my death-bed I repeat it—more than all the vain pleasures of this world. Seek, then, your happiness in the love and service of our blessed Saviour. You will find him, and he will bless you. You know very well, my dear child, that I have not wanted for misfortunes in this life. Alas! when I lost your mother, my heart was for a long time like a dry and barren garden, whose soil, burnt by the sun, cracks open, and seems to sigh for rain; it is thus that I languished, thirsting for consolation; at last I found it in the Lord. Oh! my child, there will be days in your life when your heart also will be like a dry and barren ground. But do not feel distressed at it. The thirsty ground calls not in vain for rain. God sends the rain necessary for it. Seek your consolation in the Lord. This consolation will refresh your heart as a sweet rain refreshes the thirsty earth. My dear child, let your confidence in God be un-

shaken. There is nothing he will not do for those he loves. He conducts us by grief to unmixed happiness. Do you recollect, my good Mary, all the grief which you felt when, after our painful walk, I fell down with fatigue in the middle of the road? Well, this accident was the means which the Lord made use of to procure for us the sweet rest which we have enjoyed for three years with these good people. Without this sickness we should either not have come before their door, or they would not have been touched with so much compassion. All the pleasures which we have here tasted, all the good which we have been enabled to do, all the happy days which we have here spent, are so many benefits which resulted from this sickness. It is thus, my dear Mary, that in the troubles of this life we can find proofs of the divine goodness. If the liberal hand of the Lord has scattered with flowers mountains and valleys, forests and the banks of rivers, and even muddy marshes, to give us every where the opportunity of admiring his tenderness and goodness, he has also imprinted on all the events of our life evident traces of his great wisdom, and of his compassionate love for men, in order that an attentive mind may learn by them to love and to adore Him. Every one can observe them in his own life, if he is capable of a little attention. Never have we had more to suffer than when you were accused of a theft, when you were chained and likely to be

condemned to death—when we were together weeping and lamenting in prison. Well, this evil trial has been a source of great good to us. Yes, it seems that now this benefit is visible; when the young countess distinguished you from the other young girls, did you the honour to admit you to her company, made you a present of a beautiful gown, and wished you to be always near her, no doubt you thought yourself very happy. But it was to be feared that these superfluities, these advantages would render you vain, trifling, fond of the things of this world, and apt to forget God. The Lord then consulted our interest only, when he changed our situation, and made us unhappy. In misery, in poverty, in prison, we have lived near to him; he has conducted us far from the dissipations of this corrupt world into this rude country, where he has prepared for you a better dwelling. You are here like a flower which embellishes the most secret solitude, where it has nothing to fear from the hand of man. It is he, it is this good and faithful God who wishes to give a still more happy turn to the misfortunes which you have suffered. Yes, I firmly believe that he has answered my prayer—yes, he will one day show the world your innocence. When this time shall come I shall be no more; but, convinced as I am of your innocence, I need not to see it justified in order to die tranquilly. Yes, Mary, the pain which you have suffered will yet be the means of

leading you to joy and happiness on earth, though this kind of happiness is the least, and to see that God's great design in afflicting us was to prepare us for heaven, to which we can arrive only through suffering and tribulation. Thus in misfortune let not care trouble your soul; believe that God's tenderness watches over you, and that his care will be sufficient for you, in whatever place he chooses to conduct you, in whatever painful situation you may be placed, say, ‘it is the best place —the most advantageous situation for me, notwithstanding all that I suffer.’ Believe that it is exactly the place to perfect your virtue, and for you to do the will of your Saviour who died for you.” So much exertion caused the old man to faint; but after a few hours he continued. “A gardener assigns to each plant the spot he judges the most suitable, and gives it the culture which he thinks will be the most proper to make it prosper. In the same manner God assigns to every believer that station in life which suits him best, and in which he will make the greatest progress in holiness. And thus, my dear Mary, as he has until now turned to your advantage all your misfortunes, he will also bless to you my last sickness and death. My dear child, I cannot pronounce the word *death*, without causing you to shed a torrent of tears. Do not think that death is so terrible. Let us once more speak as we formerly did in our garden at Eichbourg.

You know what happens at the beginning of spring; small and weak plants sprout out together from narrow and moist beds: it is not then supposed that they will become magnificent flowers or precious fruits, and indeed they will bear neither fruits nor flowers if they remain crowded in this narrow space; they will want room, and the gardener who placed them there does not wish them to remain there and die. He wishes to transplant them in an open space, where they may be revived by the pure air, and exposed under the azure of a beautiful sky, to the golden rays of the sun. At last, watered by rain and dew, they put forth leaves and shine in all their beauty. It was always a pleasure to you when I transplanted these young shoots, for you used to say they crowded one another in the beds. You were only satisfied when they were in an open space—now, you would say, ‘they will grow finely—it appears to me that I see it already.’ My dear daughter, we are poor weak plants; the earth which we inhabit is a narrow bed; this is not our abode, here we are but miserable vegetables; but we are destined to become something more magnificent; that is the reason why God transplants us into large and superb gardens—in a word, to heaven. Cease your weeping, my dear child; see how much better I bear my prospect of departure. Oh! how I rejoice to go soon to my Saviour; what

a happiness to be delivered from this body which has done so much evil in the world, and to be with Christ for ever! Dear Mary, do you remember the great pleasure we took in our garden on a beautiful spring morning? Heaven is compared to the most beautiful of all gardens, where an eternal spring for ever reigns: it is for this delightful country that I am going to set out. Oh! continue to serve God, and we shall be there at last united. Here we have been together only to suffer tribulations without number, we have been separated only to weep and lament. But there we shall remain together in the midst of joy and beatitude, without the least fear of separation. Mary, live always close to God, and if you are reserved for a happy life here below, let not these passing joys make you forget the joys of eternity: then one day your mother and I will meet our daughter in heaven. Do not then weep, my dear child, but rather rejoice in the prospect of the future."

It was thus that this good father attempted to console his daughter, who was soon to be left alone on the earth. It was thus that he endeavoured, by his advice, to preserve her from the corruptions of the world. Every word was a good seed which fell on well prepared ground. "I have caused you much grief and many tears, my dear child; but they are salutary tears.

Seeds sown among tears take root more easily
and thrive much better; they are like grain
which when sown, is watered by the soft showers
of spring."





CHAPTER XI.

DEATH OF MARY'S FATHER.

MHEN Mary found that her father could not survive much longer, she went to Erlenbrunn, the parish to which the Pine Cottage belonged, and told the minister of the illness of her father. This minister was an exemplary and pious man. He paid James a number of visits, and had some of the most edifying conversations with him, and failed not to console Mary with something like fatherly affection. One afternoon he found that the old man's debility sensibly increased. James requested Mary to leave the room for a moment, that he might converse alone with the minister. He soon called her in again, and said, "My dear Mary, I have settled all my worldly affairs, and am now ready to depart and be with Christ." Mary was distressed, and had great difficulty in restraining her tears, for she saw that the fatal moment was not far off. But she immediately recovered herself, lest he should be distressed. James spent the remainder of the day

and evening in silent prayer. He was in a state of holy meditation, and spoke but very little. The next day he received at the hands of the minister the bread and wine, symbols of the body and blood of Christ. Faith, love, and hope of eternal life had made his venerable countenance radiant with celestial happiness. Tears of fervour ran down his cheeks. Mary, on her knees beside his bed, trembled, wept, and prayed. The farmer, his wife, and all their household contemplated this edifying scene with lively emotions. Their hands were clasped, and you might see the tears streaming from every eye. "Now," said Mary, "I feel my heart soothed, and am much consoled; it is indeed true that the religion of Jesus Christ affords us, at the hour of death, celestial consolation." In the mean time James felt his end rapidly approaching. The farmer and his wife honoured and cherished him as their best friend, and blessed the hour that brought him to their house. They tendered to him every possible service; and came frequently every day to the door of his little chamber to know how he was. And Mary was sure to ask them each time if they did not think he would recover. Once the farmer answered her, and said, "Certainly he cannot survive the spring." From that time Mary continually sat at her little window, and, trembling, watched the budding of her flowers in the garden. Until now, the return of spring had always filled

her with joy, but now the leaves of the gooseberry bushes and the budding of the flowers filled her with sadness. The joyous chirping of the chaffinch overwhelmed her with terror; and when she saw the snow-drop and primrose she was deeply affected. "Ah!" said she, "everything is renewed—everything in nature smiles, and must my father only die, and must there be for him alone no hope?" And then, checking herself, she raised her eyes to heaven, and said, "No hope! no, no. Jesus has said he shall not die. He is only divested of this earthly tabernacle, and it is only above that he commences really to live." It gave the old man pleasure to hear Mary read to him, she did it in so sweet and clear a voice. During the latter part of his illness he wished to hear nothing better than the last words of Jesus, and his last prayer. Once during the night his daughter was sitting beside his bed, the moon shed so much light into the room that the light of the taper was scarcely visible. "Mary," said the invalid, "read me once more that beautiful prayer of our Saviour." She lighted a wax light, and began to read. "Now," said he, "give me the book, and light me a little." Mary gave him the book, and carried the light nearer. "Now," said he, "this will be the last prayer that I shall make for you." He marked the passage with his finger, and prayed in a trembling voice: "O Father, I have not long to remain in this world. I am

going, I dare hope it, I am going to thee, my Father. O preserve this my child from sin, for thy name's sake. While I have been on earth, I have endeavoured in thy name to preserve her from it. But, O Lord, I am now going to thee. I do not ask thee to take her to thee, but only to preserve her from harm. Let thy holy truth support her —thy word is truth. Grant, O heavenly Father, that the child which thou hast given me may be at last admitted to the place where I hope to go, through Jesus my Saviour. Amen." Mary, who stood beside his bed bathed in tears, repeated as well as her sobs would let her, *Amen.* "Yes," continued he, "yes, my dear daughter, there we shall see Jesus in his kingdom which he had from the beginning of the world, and there we shall see each other."

He again lay down on his pillow to rest a little. He continued to hold the book in his hand. It was the New Testament; he had bought it with the first money saved from the purchase of his food, since he had left Eichbourg. "Dear Mary," said he, some moments afterwards, "I thank you again most sincerely for all the affection and tenderness which you have shown me since my illness commenced, and which will be the last I shall feel. You have faithfully observed the fifth commandment. Trust in your heavenly Father, Mary, and you will receive of him your reward, poor and abandoned as

I am, obliged to leave you in this world, for I can give you nothing but my blessing and this book. Be always pious and good, and this blessing will not be without effect. The blessing of a father, with confidence in the Lord, is better for a virtuous child than the richest inheritance. Take this book, and let it be a remembrance of thy father. It cost me, it is true, but a few shillings, but let it be faithfully read, the precepts therein contained put in practice, and then I shall have left you the richest treasure. If I had left you as many pieces of gold as the spring produces leaves and flowers, with all that money you could not buy any thing better; for this book contains the word of God. Read in it every morning—no matter what work you have to do, time should always be found for that—read at least one passage—preserve it and meditate upon it in thy heart during the day. If you discover any obscurity, pray for the Holy Spirit to enlighten you, as I have always practised; what is of the most importance in this book may be understood by everybody, and it is to that you must attach yourself, and it is that you must practise; and it contains that which fails not to draw down upon you the blessing of heaven. This passage alone, ‘Consider the lilies of the field,’ has afforded me more lessons of wisdom than all the books which I read in my youth, and besides that it has been the source to me of a thousand pleasures, and my innumerable afflictions would have

been characterized by an unceasing anxiety, I should have been discouraged and dejected, if this passage had not afforded a serene and submissive heart."

About three o'clock the next morning, James faintly said, "I feel very ill—open the window a little." Mary opened it, the moon had disappeared; but the sky covered with stars presented a magnificent spectacle. "See how beautiful the sky appears," said the sick man. "What are the flowers of earth when compared with these stars, whose beauty suffers no diminution? it is there I am now going—what joy! Come, Lord Jesus—come quickly." On saying these words, he fell upon his bed and died the death of a Christian. Mary thought he had only fainted, for she had never seen any one die, and did not think he was so near his end; nevertheless in her fright she awoke all the family; they ran to the bed of James, and there she heard them declare he was dead. She threw herself upon the body of her father, embraced it, and wept—her lips fastened upon his wan and pale visage. The tears of the daughter, mingled with the cold sweat of the father that had ceased to be. "Oh, my father—my good father," said she, "how shall I acquit myself of all the obligations I am under? Alas! I cannot—I can only thank you for all the words, for all the good advice that I received from that mouth, those lips, now sealed in death. It is with gratitude that I

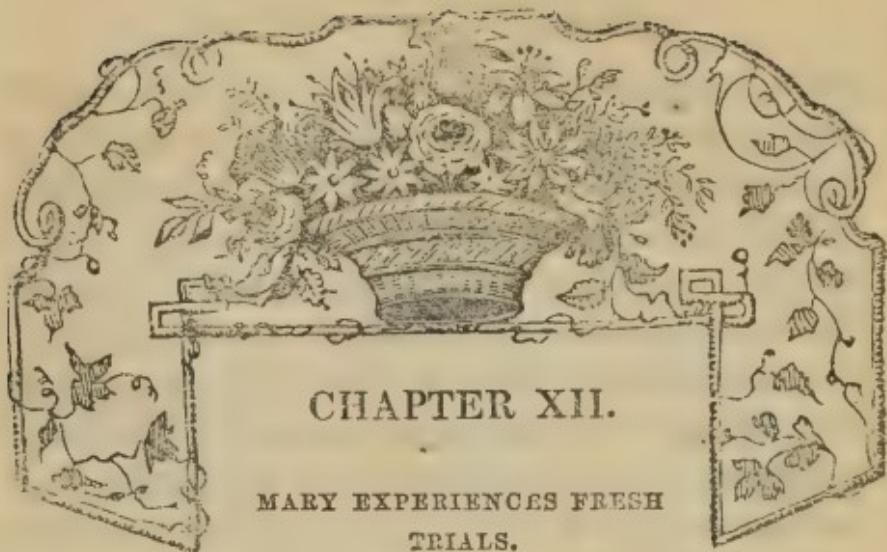
now kiss your hand, now cold and stiff, that hand which has bestowed on me so many benefits, and which has laboured for my good. Oh ! if my soul could at the same moment leave its tenement of clay—if I could follow you, my father, into the heavenly kingdom. Oh ! ‘let me die the death of the righteous.’ It is certain that this life is nothing—really nothing. What happiness must there be in heaven and in everlasting life ! That is now my only consolation.”

This was a heart-rending scene. At last the farmer’s wife, after persuading Mary for some time, prevailed upon her to lie down. Nothing would induce Mary during the following day to leave the body of her father. She read, wept, and prayed until morning. Before the coffin-lid was nailed down, Mary took one more look at her father. “Alas !” said she, “it is the last time that I shall ever behold your venerable face. How beautiful it was when you smiled, and it shone with the glory in which you were going to enter. Farewell—farewell, my father,” cried she, sobbing aloud. “May your mortal remains rest peaceably in the bosom of the earth, now while the angels of the Lord are, as I hope, bearing your soul to eternal rest.” She took a bunch of rosemary, of primrose as yellow as gold, and violets of a deep blue. She made a bouquet of them, and placed them on the bosom of her father, who during his life had sown and cultivated so many flowers. “May these

flowers, these first-fruits of the earth be," said she, "an image of your future resurrection; and this rosemary always green, the symbol of the pious recollection that will be for ever engraven on my heart." When they began to nail down the coffin-lid, every stroke of the hammer caused her so much emotion that she almost fainted. The farmer's wife led her into the next room, and begged her to lie on the bed to recover herself. After the departure of the funeral, Mary, dressed in a suit of mourning, which one of the girls of the village had given her, followed close to the body of her father. She was as pale as death, and every one pitied this poor forsaken orphan, who now had neither father nor mother. As Mary's father was a stranger at Erlenbrunn, they dug a grave for him in the corner of the cemetery beside the wall. Beside this wall were two large pine-trees which shaded the tomb. The curate preached a touching funeral sermon in respect for the diseased. He had taken for his text the words of Jesus: "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone, but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit," John xii. 24. He spoke of James's patience, and of the resignation with which he bore all the misfortunes which had fallen to his lot, and the good example he had set for those who knew him. He offered consolation to the orphan, who was overwhelmed with grief. He thanked, in the name of the deceased, the farmer and his wife, who

had so well proved to Mary and her father the kindness of their hearts. In short, he begged them to be father and mother to Mary, who had no longer any parents. Whenever Mary attended divine service at Erlenbrunn, she never failed to visit the tomb. She also went every Sunday evening, when she had an opportunity, to visit the tomb of her father, and to weep over his cherished remains. "Nowhere," would she say, "have I prayed with so much fervour as here at my father's grave. Here the whole world is nothing to me. I feel that we belong to a better world. My heart sighs for that country, because I daily feel the evil of the one in which I now am." She never left the grave without having made good resolutions to despise the pleasures of the world, and to live only to her God.





CHAPTER XII.

MARY EXPERIENCES FRESH
TRIALS.

ROM the time of her father's death Mary was always sad. The flowers had in her eyes lost all their beauty; and the pines near the farm looked as though they were clothed in black. Time, it is true, moderated her grief, but she soon had new trials to undergo. Great changes had taken place in the Pine Farm since the death of her father. The farmer had given the farm to his only son, a man of a good temper and amiable disposition, but unhappy in the choice of his wife, whom he had married a short time before. She was called handsome, and was possessed of considerable property. But she was vain of her beauty, and cared for nothing but gain: pride and avarice had by degrees imprinted on her features an expression of harshness so striking, that with all her beauty her looks were repulsive. She violently opposed religion, and not having the wholesome restraint of the gospel, if she knew that any thing would give her father and mother pleasure, she did

just the contrary ; and if she ever gave the food which was their due according to the contract, it was always with a bad grace and sordid parsimony. She sought continually to mortify them, and make their lives completely miserable. These good people retired into the little back chamber, and they seldom appeared in the front room. The young husband was no longer at his ease ; this wicked woman overwhelmed him with the grossest abuse, and cast into his teeth a hundred times a day, the money she had brought him. If he would not spend the day in quarrelling and disputing, he was obliged to suffer in silence. She would never quietly allow him to visit his parents, for fear, as she said, he would give them something secretly. In the evening after he had finished his work, he scarcely dared go near them. He found them almost always seated in sadness beside each other on the same bench : he would take a seat by them, and complain of his hard lot. "Well," said the old father, "so it is. You suffered yourself to be dazzled by the brilliancy of her gold, and by her rosy cheeks ; I yielded too easily to your wishes, and thus we are punished. We should have thought of the good advice of old James ; he was an experienced man, and never approved of this match when it was talked of during his life. I still remember every word he said on the subject, and I have thought of it more than a thousand times. Do you remember," said he to his wife, "of hav-

ing one day said, ‘ But ten thousand florins, however, make a handsome sum ! ’ ‘ A handsome sum,’ said James—‘ no, for the flowers you see in your garden are a thousand times more beautiful. Perhaps you meant to say it is a large and heavy sum. I will acknowledge that. He must have good shoulders to bear it without being bowed down to the earth, and without becoming a poor wretch, unable to raise his head to heaven. Why then wish for so much money ? You have never wanted any thing ; so far from it, you have always had more than sufficient. Believe me, too much money engenders arrogance. Rain is a useful and necessary thing ; but when too much falls, there is danger of its destroying the most healthy plants of the garden.’

“ These are exactly the words of the old friend we have lost, and I think I still hear him. And you, my son, once said to him, ‘ She has a charming person, and is beautiful and fresh as a rose.’ “ Flowers,” answered the wise old man, “ have not beauty only, they are *good* and *pretty* at the same time. They make us many rich presents ; the bee extracts from them pure wax and delicious honey. Without piety, a beautiful exterior is but a rose upon paper, a miserable trifle, without life and without perfume, which produces neither wax nor honey.’ Such were the reflections which James frankly made before us. We would not listen to him—now we know how to appreciate his advice.

That which appeared to us then so great a happiness, is now to us the height of misfortune. God give us grace to bear our misfortunes with patience."

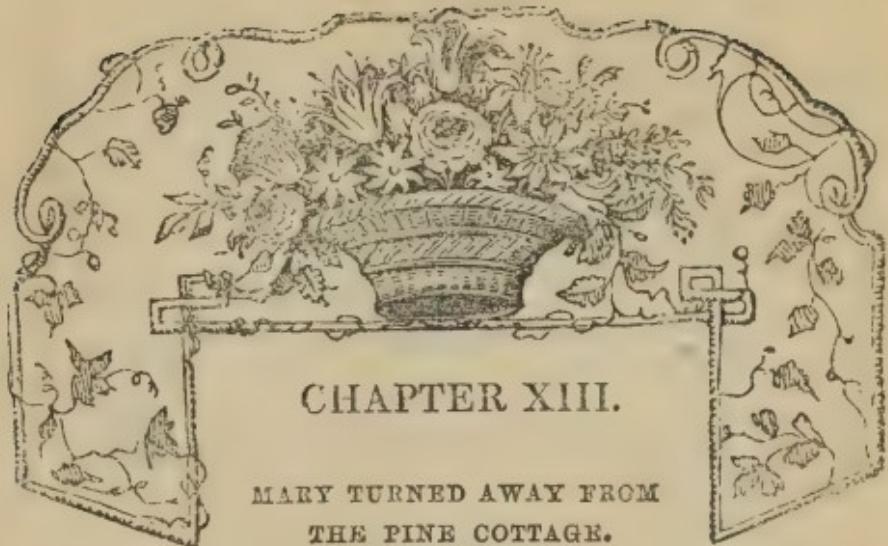
It was thus that they used to talk together. Poor Mary had also much to suffer. The old people were obliged to occupy the back room. She therefore gave up her place to them. The young farmer's wife had two rooms empty, but through wickedness she gave Mary the most miserable apartment in the house; ill-treated her in every possible way, and loaded her with abuse. There was nothing but fault-finding from morning till night. Mary did not work enough, and did not know how to do anything as it ought to be done. It was very plain to see by the poor orphan that she was despised, and a trouble to the house. The old man and his wife were not in a situation to offer her any consolation; they had enough to do with their own griefs. She thought often of going away, but where to go was the question. She asked the minister's advice. "My dear Mary," said the wise minister, "to remain any longer at the Pine Farm, is a thing impossible. Your father gave you an excellent education, and taught you all that was necessary for a village housekeeper. But at the Pine Farm they require more than the work of a robust man-servant. They put upon you labour which is beyond your strength, and which does not suit you. However, I do not advise you

to leave there immediately, and to go and seek your fortune at once. The best advice I could give you would be, to remain where you are for the present; to work as much as you can, and to wait patiently until the Lord shall deliver you from the state of oppression under which you sigh. The Saviour who raised you to another condition is still able to sustain you. I will endeavour to get you a place in an honest and Christian family. Pray; have confidence in God; bear with this trial, and God will arrange all." Mary thanked him, and promised to follow his good advice. There was no spot on earth that she loved better than the tomb of her father. She had planted a rose-tree there. "Alas!" said she, while she planted the shrub, "if I could remain here always, I would water you with my tears, and you would soon be covered with flowers and leaves." The rose-tree was already green, and the buds began to open their purple cups. "My father was right," said Mary, "when he compared the human life to a rose-tree. Sometimes it is quite naked and stripped. It offers nothing but thorns; but wait a little, and the season will again come when it shall be decked anew in foliage, and robed in the most beautiful flowers. This is now for me the time of thorns, but God forbid that I should be cast down by it. I believe your word, best of fathers. Perhaps I may see verified in my life your maxim: 'Patience produces roses.'"

Thus Mary consoled herself in her distress, and in the language of the poet she could say—

“Thou art, O Lord, my only trust,
When friends are mingled with the dust,
And all my loves are gone.
When earth has nothing to bestow,
And every flower is dead below,
I look to thee alone.”





CHAPTER XIII.

MARY TURNED AWAY FROM
THE PINE COTTAGE.

JN the midst of all Mary's troubles, the 25th of July arrived, the anniversary of her father's birth-day. Until then, it had always been to her a day of joy, but this time she hailed with tears the rising of the sun, whose gilded rays illumined her chamber. Previously she had always prepared for this day something which she knew would give her father pleasure; but now he was gone. The country people in the neighbourhood were in the habit of ornamenting with flowers the tombs of their dearest friends, particularly at the time of such anniversaries. They had often intreated Mary to give them flowers, and she always took pleasure in gratifying their wishes. She now thought of decorating her father's tomb in the same manner. The beautiful basket which had been the first cause of all her unhappiness was before her on the cupboard. Mary took it, and filled it with flowers of all

colours, and with fresh leaves, carried it to Erlenbrunn an hour before divine service, and deposited it on her father's tomb. Her tears, in falling on the nosegay, resembled drops of dew. "Oh, the best and dearest of fathers," said she, "you have strewed with flowers the path of life for me. If I cannot do as much for you, I will at least ornament your grave with flowers." Mary left the basket on the tomb. She had no fear that any one would dare to steal either the basket or the flowers. At a little distance the country people contemplated this offering with joy mingled with pity, blessed in their hearts James's pious daughter, and prayed for her prosperity. The following day, as the people of the farm were taking in the hay from a large meadow situated beyond the forest, a piece of fine linen, which was spread out on the grass near the rivulet, a few steps from the house, suddenly disappeared. The young farmer's wife did not miss it until the evening. Suspicious, as all misers are, her suspicions immediately fell on Mary. The good father James, far from concealing the history of the ring, had related it to the old farmer and his wife. Their son, who had heard it, imprudently related it to his wife. In the evening, when Mary, a rake on her shoulder and an earthen pitcher in her hand, came into the house with the servants, this wicked woman came out of the kitchen and met her with a torrent of abuse, and ordered her to return the linen im-

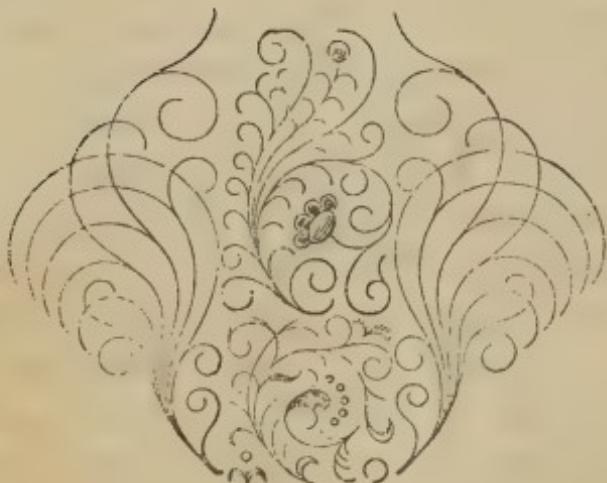
mediately. The poor girl answered with mildness, that it was impossible she could have taken the linen, as she had passed the whole day in the hay-field with the people of the house; that a stranger might easily have taken advantage of a moment, when there was no one in the kitchen, to commit the theft. This conjecture was indeed the truth. But the farmer's wife began to scold in a frightful tone. "Thief!" cried she, "do you think I am ignorant of the theft of the ring, and what difficulty you had to escape the sword of the executioner? Be gone as soon as possible. There is no room in my house for creatures like you."—"It is too late," said the husband, "to send her away now. The sun is setting. Let her sup with us, as she has worked all day in an excessive heat—consent to keep her only this one night."—"Not even an hour," said this wicked woman. The husband soon saw that advice would only serve to irritate her still more; he was therefore silent. Mary made no answer to the accusations of the farmer's wife. She wrapped up the little she had in a clean napkin quite large enough to contain all, put the little bundle under her arm, thanked the inhabitants of the Pine Farm for the services they had done her, protested once more her innocence, and asked permission to take leave of her benefactors. "You may do that," said the farmer's wife, with a disdainful smile, "and if you wish to take with you these two old grey-headed

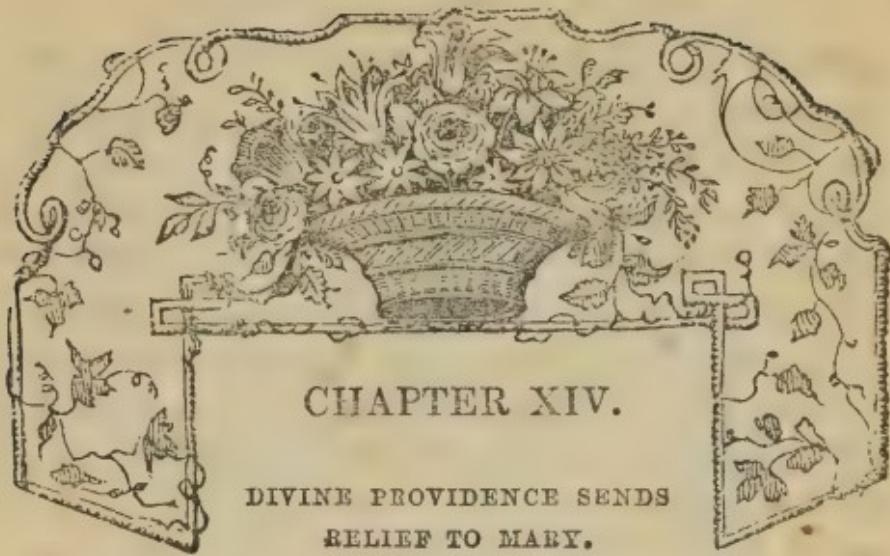
people, it will give me great pleasure. Otherwise, it is evident, death designs not to rid me of them for some time.” The good old people had heard this noise, and wept. However they consoled Mary as well as they could, and gave her some money to assist her on her journey. “Go, good girl!” said they to her, “and may God conduct you.” Mary set out towards the close of the day with her little bundle under her arm, and began to climb up the mountain, following a narrow road in the woods. She wished to visit once more her father’s tomb. When she came out of the forest, the village clock struck seven, and before she arrived at the grave-yard it was nearly dark. But she was not afraid to pass the night in the midst of the graves. She went to her father’s tomb, and her tears fell in torrents. The full moon shone through the dark foliage of the two pines, and illumined with a silver light the roses on the grave, and the **BASKET OF FLOWERS**. An evening breeze blew with a soft murmur among the branches of the pine-trees, and agitated in turn the trembling leaves of the rose-tree planted on the tomb. “My dear father,” said Mary, “why are you not still here to hear my complaints? It is better, and it is a blessing for which I thank the Lord, that you did not live to witness this affliction. You are now happy, and inaccessible to grief. Oh! why am I not with you? Alas! when was I so much to be pitied as now? When the moon

illumined my prison through the iron bars, you were then alive. Oh, my dear father, now it illumines your grave. When I was driven from my country that I loved so much, at least you were left me, and I had in you a good father, a protector, and faithful friend. Now I have no one. Poor, forsaken, and suspected of crime, a stranger, I am alone in the world, and know not where to lay my head. A little corner remained to me in the earth,—one little corner, and behold, I am driven from it. My last consolation was to come from time to time and weep on your grave ; of this also I am deprived.” At these words she began again to weep. “Alas !” said she, “I dare not at this hour beg an asylum for the night. If I relate why I was turned out of doors, no one, perhaps, will consent to receive me.” She looked around her. Against the grave-yard wall, and near her father’s tomb, was a grave-stone, very old and quite covered with moss. As the inscription had been effaced, it was left there to be used as a bench. “I will sit down on this stone,” said she, and pass the night near the tomb of my father. It is perhaps, the last time I shall ever be here. Perhaps I shall never again see this tomb which is so dear to me. To-morrow, before day-break, if it be the will of God, I shall continue my rout, and I will go whither his hand may direct me.”

“One adequate support
For the calamities of mortal life

Exists, one only ;—an assured belief
That the procession of our fate, howe'er
Sad or undisturbed, is ordered by a Being
Of infinite benevolence and power,
Whose everlasting purposes embrace
All accidents, converting them to good.
—The darts of anguish fix not where the seat
Of suffering hath been thoroughly fortified
By acquiescence in the Will Supreme
For time and for eternity ; by faith,
Faith absolute in God, including hope,
And the defence that lies in boundless love
Of His perfections ; with habitual dread
Of aught unworthily conceived, endured
Impatiently : ill-done, or left undone,
To the dishonour of His holy name.
Soul of our souls, and safeguard of the world !
Sustain, Thou only canst, the sick of heart ;
Restore their languid spirits, and recall
Their lost affections unto thee and thine."





CHAPTER XIV.

DIVINE PROVIDENCE SENDS
RELIEF TO MARY.

MARY sat down on a stone near the wall, and under the thick foliage of a pine, which covered her with its dark branches. She hid her face in her handkerchief, all bathed in tears. Her soul was troubled, and she breathed from the bottom of her heart prayers so fervent that language would fail to express them. Scarcely had she finished, when she heard a sweet voice calling her familiarly by her name, "Mary, Mary." She looked and trembled. Then she saw a being with a beautiful face and elegant figure. She was dressed in a long robe as white as snow, on which the moon shone with brightness. Mary could see her distinctly, and frightened and trembling, she was about to fly, "Dear Mary," said this being, in a most affable manner, "be not alarmed. I am but a mortal like yourself. But I come to your assistance. God has heard your fervent prayers. Look at me: is it

possible you do not know me?" With an exclamation of surprise, Mary cried, "Is it you, the Countess Amelia? Oh, how did you get here? here in so frightful a place at this hour of the night, so far from your home?" The Countess raised Mary gently from the ground, pressed her to her heart, and kissed her tenderly. "Dear Mary," said she, "we have been doing you great injustice. You have been ill rewarded for the pleasure you gave me by the gift of the basket of flowers. But at last your innocence is recognised. Ah! can you forgive us? Can you forgive my parents and me? Come, we are ready to repair everything so far as it lies in our power. Forgive us, dear Mary."

"Do not speak thus," said Mary. "Considering the circumstances, you used a great deal of indulgence towards me. No, it never entered my mind to nourish the least resentment towards you. I only thought of your kindness with gratitude. My only sorrow was, that you and your dear parents should regard me as an ungrateful and hard-hearted wretch. My most ardent desire was, that you might one day be convinced of my innocence, and this desire God has granted. May his name be praised."

The Countess pressed Mary to her heart, and bathed her face in tears. Afterwards she looked at the tomb, and clasping her hands, exclaimed in accents of grief, "Oh thou noble man, thou

honest gardener, whose remains here repose in the bosom of the earth, thou whom I learned to love from my most tender infancy, whose affectionate counsels I have so often received, and to whose fervent prayers I have so often listened,—why cannot I see thy face to ask thy pardon for all the injustice we have done thee! Ah! if we had taken more precaution, if we had placed more confidence in an old servant who had always shown an unimpeachable probity and fidelity, thy remains would not be here to be eaten of worms; thou hadst still been living with us."

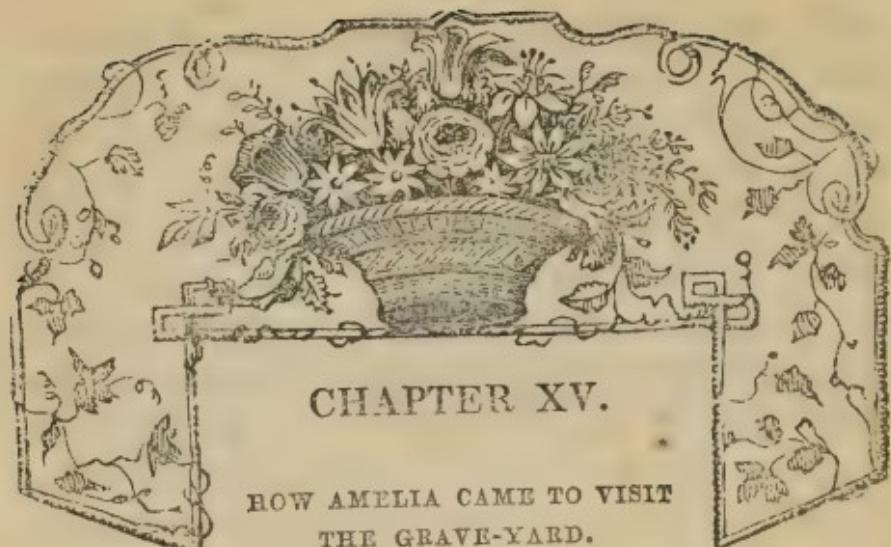
"Alas, good Countess," said Mary, "my father was far from feeling the least resentment towards you. He prayed for you every evening and morning, as he was accustomed to do while we lived in Eichbourg. He blessed you all at the hour of his death. 'Mary,' said he, a little while before he died, 'I feel perfectly confident that those whom we served will one day recognise your innocence, and will recall you from exile. Assure then the Count, the Countess, and Amelia, whom I have more than once carried in my arms, that my heart was full of respect, of love, and gratitude towards them till my last breath. Be assured, Countess, that those were his last words.'

The tears of the good Amelia flowed still abundantly. "Come, Mary," said she, "come, and sit down here with me on this stone. I cannot

leave this tomb. We are safe here in the sanctuary of the Lord, and let me tell you how all these strange events have happened."

"There are emotions, in that grateful hour
Of twilight and serenity, which steal
Upon the heart with more than wonted power,
Making more pure and tender all we feel,—
Softening its very core, as doth the shower
The thirsty glebe of summer. We reveal
More, in such hours of stillness, unto those
We love, than years of passion could disclose.





CHAPTER XV.

HOW AMELIA CAME TO VISIT
THE GRAVE-YARD.

"**G**D is surely with you, dear Mary," said the young Countess, after having made Mary sit down beside her. "He has taken you under his protection. It is he who has marvellously conducted me here to assist you. There is nothing but what is simple and natural in the recital which I shall give you. You will, however, see in it a chain of truly providential circumstances. From the time that your innocence was made known to the world, I had no more rest. You and your father were always present to my mind. Believe me, dear Mary, I have shed many tears on your account. My parents sought for you every where, without being able to obtain any knowledge of you. Two days ago, I came with my father and mother to the hunting castle of the prince, in the forest not far from this village. For twenty years, at least, this castle has not been visited, and it is inhabited

only by the gamekeeper. My father had some particular business. He had spent the whole day in the forest, in company with two strange lords, whom the same business had brought here. These gentlemen came accompanied by their wives, and a young lady, the daughter of one of them. It had been extremely warm during the day, and the evening was so fine, so fresh, so delicious; the setting sun offered so beautiful a spectacle, the mountains covered with forests of pines, and interspersed with picturesque rocks, were so novel a spectacle, and afforded a pleasure so lively, that I begged permission to view once more the country. The gamekeeper's daughter accompanied me; as we passed along, we found a door of the grave-yard open, and the rays of the setting sun gilded the tombstones. I had always since my childhood taken pleasure in reading inscriptions and epitaphs: I am moved when one tells of a young man or woman carried off in the bloom of youth; I feel an indescribable, melancholy pleasure, if it concerns a person who had reached an advanced age. The verses themselves, although the sentiments which dictate them are often better than the language in which they are clothed, excite in me a crowd of serious feelings, and I never fail to draw from these epitaphs good thoughts and useful resolutions, which I carry away with me. We came in. After I had read a great number of the inscrip-

tions, the gamekeeper's daughter said to me, 'I want to show you something very beautiful. It is the grave of an old man. You will there find neither tomb nor epitaph, but it has been ornamented with taste and elegance by the tender piety of a daughter. See through the thick foliage of these pines, a beautiful rose-tree, and basket of flowers on the tomb.' I came to it, and stood petrified at the first glance, as I recognised the basket which had presented itself to my mind a thousand times since you left Eichbourg. I drew near to look at it, and if I had had any doubts, the initials of my name, and the arms of my family would have removed them. I asked for your history, and that of your father. The gamekeeper's daughter related to me your residence at the Pine Farm, the last sickness and death of your father, and the grief which it has caused you. I went to the minister, whom I found a very respectable divine. He confirmed all that I had before heard, and praised you very, very much. I wished to go immediately to the Pine Farm, but during the recital time had flown so rapidly, that it was already quite dark. What shall I do? said I; it is now too late to go to the farm, but to-morrow at day-break, we will set out. The minister sent for the schoolmaster, to charge him to go and bring you without delay to the manor. 'Poor stranger,' said the schoolmaster, 'you need not go far to look for her:

she went a short time ago to her father's tomb, and there she is weeping and lamenting. Alas ! poor child,' said he, ' may grief not produce in her a disease of the mind. I saw her from an opening in the steeple when I went to wind up the clock.' The minister wished to accompany me to the tomb of your father ; but I begged him to allow me to go to you alone, so that I might embrace you with all my heart without any witnesses : and yielding to my importunities, he went to tell my parents where I was, and to prepare them for your arrival. This accounts, my dear Mary, for my sudden appearance. Thus, through the ordering of divine Providence, this BASKET OF FLOWERS has re-united us at the tomb of your father, who is now inhabiting the dwelling of the blessed."

" Yes," said Mary, clasping her hands, and raising her grateful eyes to heaven, " God has done it all. He has had pity on my tears, and on the extremity in which I was. O what goodness, what boundless tenderness !"

" I have still one thing to tell you yet, my dear Mary," answered the Countess, interrupting her ; " one peculiarity of this history appears to me singularly touching, and inspires me with an awe for the justice of God, who often directs our lot unknown to ourselves. Juliette, the greatest enemy you have upon earth, had but one thought—one desire : it was to banish you from my heart, and

to confirm herself in your place. It was with that view that she imagined her dreadful falsehood, and her atrocious stratagem appeared to her to have succeeded but too well. But afterwards it was exactly this falsehood that caused her to lose her place and our confidence, and that rendered you more dear than ever to our hearts. She endeavoured to estrange you for ever from me. Your banishment was continually to her a subject of triumph. In the transport of her malignant joy, she went in the excess of wickedness, and threw at your feet this basket with an insulting laugh, and it was exactly this event, which was afterwards, although she little thought it then, to reunite us for ever. Was it not, indeed, this basket which discovered to me your secret dwelling? It is true that with the love of God we have nothing to fear from any enemy. God knows how to turn to our advantage all the ill that wicked people can do us; and thus our most cruel enemies, in all that they attempt against us, can do nothing in reality but contribute to our happiness. It is very well in this case to say that our safety comes from our enemies. But it is time," continued the Countess, "to relate to me also what brought you so late to your father's tomb, and why just now you were crying so bitterly."

Mary related how they had driven her from the Pine Cottage, a new subject of astonishment to the Countess.—"Yes, indeed," said Amelia, "it

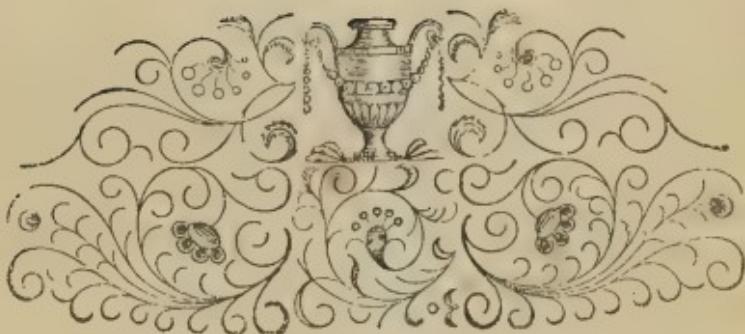
is by God's will that I have arrived just at the time when you were plunged into the deepest distress, when you were imploring his assistance in an accent so sorrowful, and when scalding tears were running down your cheeks. You again see in this a surprising proof of this truth, that *God knows how to turn to our advantage the ill which our enemies design to do us.* The farmer's wicked wife, who drove you from her house, thought she would make you unhappy, and without knowing it, she has conducted you to my arms, and those of my parents, who, as well as myself, are desirous of making you happy. But it is time to set out," said Amelia; "my parents are waiting for me. Come, dear Mary, I will never leave you any more, and to-morrow you shall set out with us."

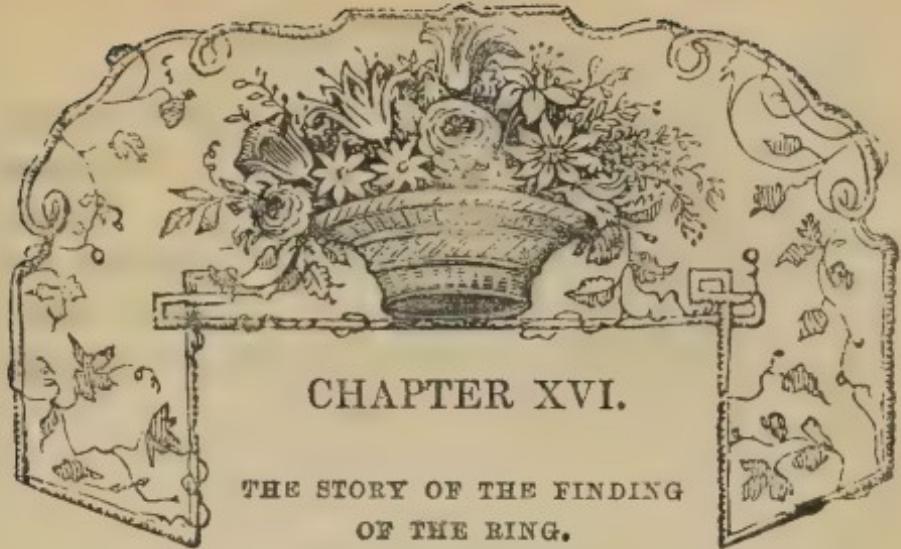
"The heavens look down on us with eyes of love,
And earth itself looks heavenly; the sleep
Of nature is around us, but above
Are beings that eternal vigils keep.
'Tis sweet to dwell on such, and deem they strove
With sorrow once, and fled from crowds to weep
In loneliness, as we perchance have done;
And sigh to win the glory they have won!"

Mary, who thought with grief that perhaps she never should return to this place, bade adieu to the cherished tomb, and it was with difficulty that she could leave it. At length, the Countess took her by the hand, saying, "Come, come, dear Mary, and take with you this basket of flowers, in order that we may always have in remembrance the present of your venerable father. Instead of the bas-

ket with which your filial piety ornamented his tomb, we will erect a monument more lasting, and it will be to you. I am sure a subject of joy, Come, you must be impatient to hear the history of the ring, and I will relate it to you on the road."

She took her arm, and walked by the soft light of the moon towards the castle.





CHAPTER XVI.

THE STORY OF THE FINDING OF THE RING.

ALONG and dark walk of high and old linden trees led to the castle. After Amelia and Mary had walked for some time in silent reverie, "I must," said the young Countess, "relate to you how the ring was found. We left the court this year earlier than usual, in the beginning of March. The affairs of my father required his presence at Eichbourg. Scarcely had we arrived when the weather changed. One night, in particular, we had a tremendous storm. You know the enormous pear-tree we had in our garden at Eichbourg. It was already very old, and bore scarcely any fruit. The wind, which that night blew with great violence, had bent it so much that it threatened every moment to fall. My father ordered it to be cut down. All the servants were obliged to assist, and to take great care, in order that it should not injure the other trees in its fall. My father, my mother, the children, and indeed all the people in the castle had

come into the garden. They all wanted to see. As soon as the tree fell down, my two little brothers ran immediately towards a nest of magpies, which was in the tree, and which had been for a long time an object of dispute between these children. They examined their prey with great attention. ‘Look ! brother,’ said Augustus, ‘what is that shining among the branches ? What brightness !’—‘It is something,’ said Albert, ‘as sparkling as gold and precious stones.’ Juliette made haste to look at it, and uttered a scream, ‘Oh,’ said she, ‘*it is the ring !*’ and became as pale as death. The children undid the ring from among the branches, and carried it immediately, in great glee, to my mother. ‘Yes, it is,’ said my mother. Oh ! good and honest James.—Oh ! poor Mary, what injustice we have done you. I am very glad to find this ring again, but I should be much more so if I could find James and Mary. I would willingly make the sacrifice of the ring to repair the wrong which I have done them.’—‘But,’ said I, ‘by what singular chance was this ring carried into the nest at the top of the tree ?’—‘That is what I am going to explain to you,’ said the old huntsman Anthony, with tears in his eyes, such was his joy in seeing your innocence acknowledged ! ‘Neither the old gardener James, nor his daughter Mary, could have hidden the ring in this place. That is very clear. The tree was so high, and it would have been almost impossible to climb up as

high as that. Besides, they did not give them time. Mary had scarcely returned to the house when she and her father were both arrested. But magpies, these black birds that had their nests upon this tree, have a great taste for anything that shines; and if they can find anything that has that quality, they carry it off immediately to their nest. One of these birds stole the ring and carried it to the tree. That is all the mystery. The only thing that astonishes me is, that an old huntsman like I am, should not have thought sooner that these birds might have stolen the lost ring.'—'Anthony,' said my mother, 'you are perfectly right, and the whole secret bursts upon me at once. I recollect very distinctly that very often these birds came from the top of this tree to the window, that the sash was up when the ring disappeared, that the table upon which I had put the ring was close to the window, and that after having shut the door and bolted it, I went into the next room, where I stayed for some time. No doubt one of these mischievous birds distinguished the ring from the top of this tree, and took advantage of the moment in which I was amusing myself in the other room, to come and carry it off in his beak without being perceived.' My father was troubled and confounded at having a conviction so unforeseen, still so complete, that you and your father had been the victims of an unjust condemnation. 'My heart is almost broken,' said he, 'for having done

these good people so much injury. My only consolation is, that it was not done through ill-will, but in ignorance and error.' Thereupon he went to Juliette, who, amidst all the gaiety pictured on every countenance, remained pale and trembling like a guilty creature. 'False wretch !' said he, 'deceitful servant ! what could have given you the boldness to lie to your master and to justice, and to induce them to do an action the iniquity of which now cries for vengeance ? How could you take upon yourself to precipitate into an abyss of suffering an old and honest man, and his poor and innocent daughter ? Come, seize her in an instant,' said he to two officers of justice, who had assisted in cutting down the tree, and who had already approached Juliette, and had their eyes fixed on my father, whose orders they were waiting. 'Let her be loaded with chains,' said he, in a grave tone, 'the same chains that Mary wore, and let her be thrown into the same prison in which she caused Mary to languish. She ought to suffer all that Mary suffered without having deserved it. What she has been able to pick up, of money or clothes, shall be taken from her to serve as a compensation, if it is still possible, to those unhappy people who have had to groan under an unjust process. In fine, the officer who conducted Mary out of my dominions shall also conduct Juliette just as she is, as far as the limit.' These words made every one present tremble.

They were all pale and silent. No one had ever seen my father so exasperated; never had they heard him speak with so much warmth. A profound silence reigned for some time. At last, every one readily spoke his sentiments and thoughts. ‘It is well done,’ said the officer, taking Juliette by the arm. ‘When one digs another’s grave one must fill it one’s self.’—‘That is what is gained by telling falsehoods,’ said the other officer, taking her other arm. ‘It is true that no thread is so fine that it cannot be seen in the sunshine.’—‘It was a pretty dress given to Mary,’ said the cook, in her turn, ‘that made Juliette angry. In her passion, not knowing well what she was about, she began to tell falsehoods, and then it was impossible to retract without acknowledging herself an infamous liar. Thus the proverb is not wrong which says, “When once the devil has us by the hair, he will hold fast to us always.”’—‘It is well, it is well,’ said the coachman, who had just finished cutting the tree, and who still had the axe over his shoulder. ‘Let us hope that at least this time she will mend her ways, if she does not wish to be worse off in the next world. The tree that bears not good fruit,’ said he, shaking his axe, ‘shall be cut down and cast into the fire.’ The news of the ring was spread through all Eichbourg in an instant, and every one ran to the place, so that in a little while there was a great crowd round us. Our bailiff came also into the garden. Every wit-

ness of the discovery was as eager as possible to tell him all about it.

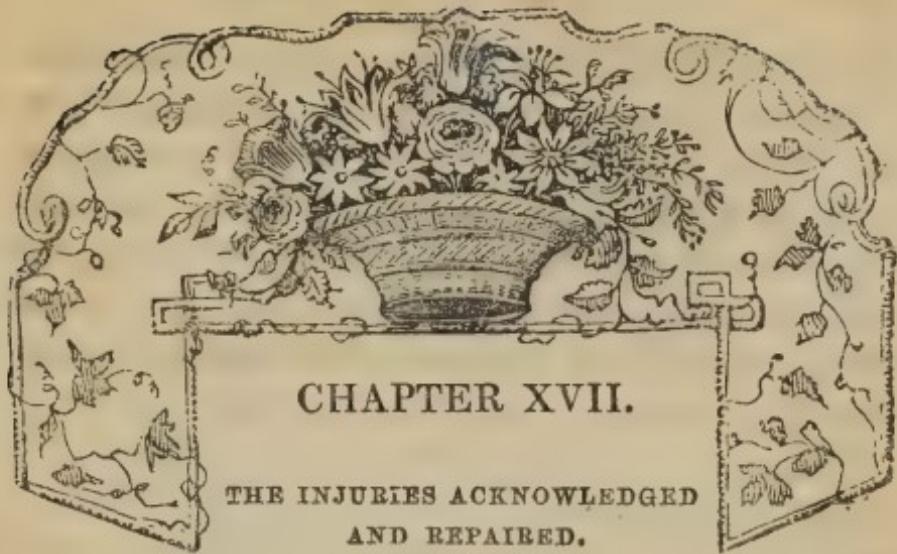
" You cannot imagine, my dear Mary, the effect that this story produced on the good bailiff. Notwithstanding his severity respecting you, he is most assuredly a man of great probity, and one who has attached himself all his life to laws and justice with inviolable fidelity. ' I would give half my goods,' said he, in a tone that went to the heart of every one, ' yes, I would willingly have given every thing that I possess, if this misfortune had not happened. To condemn innocence has something frightful in it.' Then looking round him at the assembled multitude, he said, in a loud and solemn voice, ' God is the only infallible judge, the only one who cannot be deceived. He knows everything: he alone knew how the ring disappeared; he alone knew the place in which it had remained hidden until now. The judges of the earth are near-sighted, and very likely to deceive themselves. It is rare here below that innocence suffers and vice triumphs. The invisible Judge, who will recompense one day all good actions, and punish all bad ones, the Most High, has resolved that even here below, innocence shall not suffer from suspicion, nor hidden crime remain long concealed. And see, admire, by what a marvellous chain of events circumstances have obeyed his holy will to concur to this end. It was necessary that this dreadful storm which shook the whole

castle and made us all tremble last night, should bend the old tree and make us fear that it would fall. It was necessary that a heavy and sudden shower should wash the inside of the nest, in order that the ring, itself washed, should immediately strike us by its brilliancy. It was necessary that lively and playful children, who would not seek to hide what they had found, should first have discovered the ring. It was necessary that Juliette herself, who had made herself guilty of the falsehood, should be the first to proclaim, if I may so speak, loudly by a scream, the innocence of Mary. This is not the only example of so marvellous a story. It is true that God has reserved to himself the business of submitting all the old cases to a revision, only in another world, and to render to every one the justice that is due to him, sending him to inherit life or death. However, he sometimes permits events to occur even upon earth, to oblige you to turn your looks to him, to the sovereign Judge, who is not open to any surprise, who then forces us to believe that eternal justice governs all things, and renders unto all their due.' Such were the words that the judge pronounced in a vehement tone. Every one listened attentively to his discourse; they agreed that he was right, and they all dispersed with a pensive air. That, my dear Mary, is the way in which the ring was found."

While Amelia was relating this fortunate ad-

venture, in the recital of which Mary appeared to be deeply interested,—frequently casting her eyes to heaven,—with looks of adoring gratitude to Almighty God, for thus clearing her character from every stain of suspicion, and establishing the conviction of her innocence in the minds of her friends. At the conclusion of the narration, they had arrived at the door of the castle.





CHAPTER XVII.

THE INJURIES ACKNOWLEDGED
AND REPAIRED.

HE Count, the Countess, and the other people of the house were assembled in the drawing-room of the castle, which was decorated with taste and magnificence. Some time had elapsed since the worthy minister had arrived in the parlour, and all the company had been listening with the greatest interest to what he had been saying of James and Mary. Indeed he spoke from the heart, related in an animated tone the history of the pious old man, painted in rich and touching colours the noble sentiments and all the conduct of this upright man during his residence at the Pine Cottage—spoke particularly of his respect and love for the Count and his family. He related numerous instances of the filial piety of Mary, of her indefatigable activity, of her patience and modesty. Tears streamed from the eyes of all who listened to him. At this moment, the Countess Amelia, holding Mary in

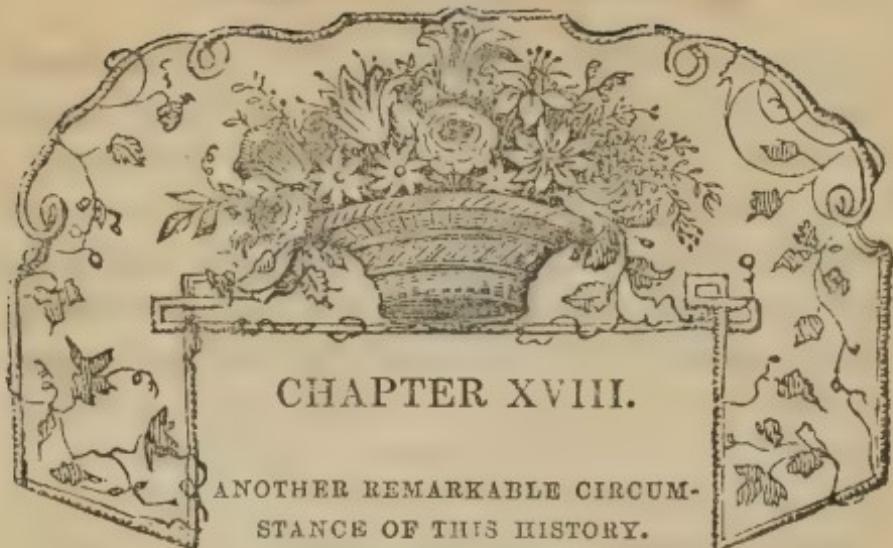
one hand, and with the other carrying the *basket of flowers*, entered the richly-lighted room. Every one tried to outdo his fellow in welcoming her, and Mary was loaded with congratulations. The Count took her kindly by the hand, and said, “Poor child, how pale and thin you look. It was our inconsiderate conduct that deprived your cheeks of their fresh colour, and furrowed with wrinkles your young forehead, lately so smooth. We will spare nothing that the faded flowers may once more bloom on your cheeks. We chased you from the paternal roof; you shall have the house in future for your property. O yes, your father only enjoyed the pretty house and handsome garden of Eichbourg as a tenant, but now it shall be yours.” The Countess kissed Mary, pressed her to her heart, called her her daughter, and taking from her finger the ring which had caused so many misfortunes—“Here, my dear child,” said she, “your piety is a jewel more precious, it is true, than the large diamond which sparkles in the ring. Still, although you possess a richer treasure, accept this present—receive it as a feeble compensation for the wrong you have suffered, and as a token of the sincere attachment and maternal tenderness that I feel towards you.” At these words she put the ring on Mary’s finger. Mary, who had shed so many bitter tears, now shed very sweet ones. She was almost overcome with so much kindness, and ready to sink under

the weight of the benefits, as if it was a heavy burden. "Poor child," said one of the company, "take what a generous benefactor offers you. God has loaded the Count and his wife with the goods of fortune, but he has given them something more precious—hearts which know how to make the best use of riches."—"Why do you flatter us?" said the Countess; "this is not a *generous* action—it is but an act of *justice*."

Mary, always modest, held with a trembling hand the ring which she had taken, and turned her eyes, wet with tears, towards the minister, to know what she was to do. "Yes, Mary," said the venerable minister, "yes, you must keep the ring. You see, my good child, God is blessing your filial piety; for whoever sincerely honours his parents shall be the better for it. God has promised it, and God makes use of the benevolent hand of the Count and Countess to fulfil his word. Receive, then, this rich present with gratitude, and since adversity has found in you a due resignation to the Divine will, you have only to show yourself in prosperity grateful to his name, benevolent and kind." Mary put the ring on her finger; her tears choked her utterance and expressed her gratitude. Amelia, who stood beside her with the Basket of Flowers in her hand, was delighted with the generous proceedings of her parents. Her eyes shone with affection for Mary. The minister, who had but too often observed how envious chil-

dren generally are when their parents exercise their benevolence towards other people, was only more touched by this disinterestedness of Amelia. "May God," said he, "reward the generosity of the Count and Countess, and may all that they have done for a poor orphan be rendered to them a hundred fold, in the person of their own dear daughter."





CHAPTER XVIII.

ANOTHER REMARKABLE CIRCUM-
STANCE OF THIS HISTORY.

CTHE Countess ordered supper to be brought, and chose that Mary should eat with her. While the blessing was being pronounced, according to an excellent custom which then reigned generelly amongst the highest class of people, Mary experienced quite an extraordinary emotion. She was invited to sit down between the Countess and her daughter Amelia. She objected, with a timidity suitable to her age and sex, to accept this place of honour. But the Countess insisted on it, and taking her by the hand, led her to the place destined for her. During the repast nothing was talked of but Mary's story. The Count had brought with him the old huntsman, the honest Anthony, who was perfectly acquainted with the forest. This faithful servant, more from pleasure than duty, always assisted in waiting upon his master's table. That evening he stood almost all the time behind Mary's chair, and did not cease to wipe his eyes.

His age had given him the right to put in a word here and there. "Is it not true, Miss Mary?" said he. "Do we not at last see the fulfilment of what I told you and your father in the forest? he who trusts in God may be sure of Divine protection. Only one thing is wanting. If your father, that old, that respectable friend of my youth, had lived long enough to see the light of this joyful day! That good father James! Ah! what happiness it would have been for him here to contemplate the dearest object of his love on earth, his daughter, acknowledged innocent, and thus loaded with honour. Why did he not live to see this day, and taste so great a pleasure?"—"Good old man," said the minister, "I admire your sentiments, for they do honour to your heart; but our view must not be limited by the short horizon of this life. It is the smallest, and I dare say, the most miserable portion of our existence, taken in its extent. This world is only the vestibule to another. The life we live upon earth is only the preparation for a better one which is reserved for us in heaven. Now, if we consider the existence of man without regarding his future destination, we shall make great errors. But let us raise our eyes to heaven, and then such views will offer themselves to us as will console our minds, respecting every dispensation. That was the case with Mary and James. The misfortunes that this young girl endured have been already recompensed in a most noble manner. As

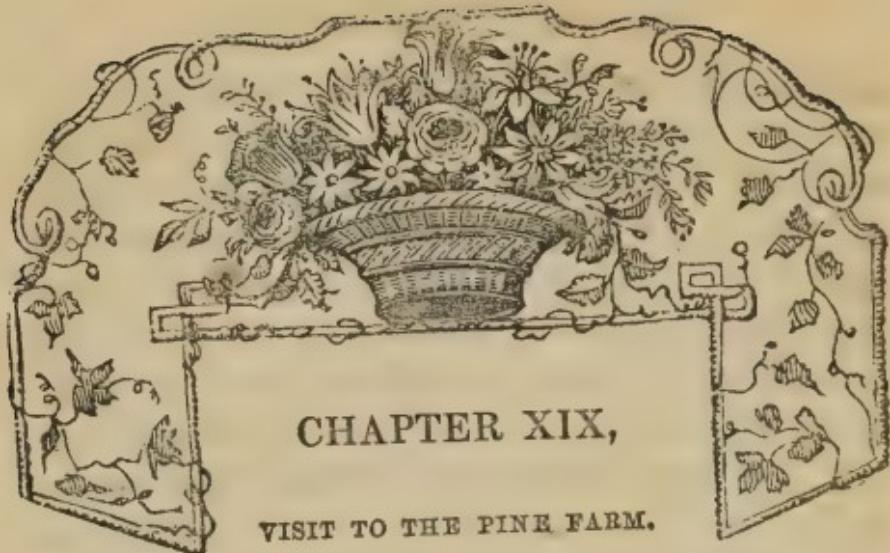
for her father, it seemed good to God that he should die misjudged and plunged into the depths of misery. But there is another and a better life. There is, happily for us, a celestial dwelling-place. It is there that he now tastes the joys and the sweets of a glorious felicity, and we who are seated at this banquet, in this brilliant room, have not a shadow of the pleasure which he enjoys. But more—I do not know why—but my heart tells me, and in many cases it is better to believe one's heart than one's head, my heart tells me that this pious old man who carried with him to heaven the sentiments of a father, takes more pleasure in this development than we think. Let me relate a fact which I had almost forgotten among so many other things.

“I went one morning to his bed-side. Whatever was his confidence in Divine Providence, he could not, however, help expressing some anxiety respecting his dear daughter; but that day I found him uncommonly cheerful, his countenance was serene, and there was a smile upon his lips: he held his hand out of bed to me, and said, ‘Now sir, I am at last freed from the burden that was on my heart, my anxiety concerning my daughter; I now am perfectly tranquil. Last night I prayed with more fervour than I ever perhaps did in my life, and I felt in my heart the sweetness of a calm unknown until now, and a consolation truly divine. I feel firmly confident that my prayer will

be heard. I shut my eyes and slept quite composedly, for I know that the innocence of my daughter will be discovered—the noble Count will take care of her as a father, and she will find a mother in the Countess.' Such were the words of the pious old man; and this evening at table I have just learned, to my astonishment, that that very night the violence of the wind had beat down the old tree which grew in the garden of the castle, and thus shown to the world, with the ring that was lost, the innocence of Mary. Thus even at the very moment, was his fervent prayer answered. It is a consolation to me to think that even beyond the tomb he is not a stranger to the happiness of his daughter, the object of so much tenderness; and that he participates in our joys. One thing is certain, that the prayer of this pious old man, offered up that night, and immediately answered, enlightens the chain of events, with a light which rejoices the soul. It appears to make this little history a work of Divine Providence. No," continued the minister with emotion, "our meeting here is not the effect of accident; it is not a blind chance, which has prepared this touching scene, which has filled us with so much happiness. It is the goodness of God—it is his holy Providence, which has conducted me, a stranger, into the midst of this company. He has willed that I should bear witness of him in revealing a circumstance confided to me by the dying, and which has

caused us to penetrate into the secrets of this history. May we be convinced by this event, that God overrules all events. May we be persuaded that we have on high a Father, whose heart beats with love for us. May we retain so sweet a belief in life and death!"—"That belief, my dear minister," said the Countess, rising and giving him her hand, "I share with you." Every one present had the same sentiment, and they all rose as she had done. "It is now late," added the Countess, "and as we shall set out very early to-morrow morning, we must rest a little, and we will separate for the present, in order to avoid any distraction which might make us lose the good feelings which the minister has awakened in us. We could not better finish the day." They all separated with hearts full of gratitude to God.





CHAPTER XIX,

VISIT TO THE PINE FARM.

HE next mornig, as soon as the sun was up, everybody in the castle was occupied in preparing for the departure; but nothing could equal the attention they all paid to Mary. During her residence at the Pine Farm, as Mary was obliged to buy herself clothes, she was able to get only those of the coarsest character, and she was, therefore, dressed almost exactly as the villagers of the country.

But a young lady who was of the same age and size as Mary, presented her, at the request of Amelia, with a complete dress, neat, handsome, and new, and such as, without being at all extravagant, suited her new situation,—“For,” said Amelia, “henceforth, you are my friend, my companion, and you will always live with me; therefore you ought to dress yourself differently.”

After breakfast they rode out, and Mary was placed beside Amelia, opposite to the Count and Countess. The Count ordered the coachman to

take them to the Pine Farm, because he wished to become acquainted with the people who had given Mary and her father so hearty a welcome. On the way they inquired about their situation with great interest, and Mary did not hide from them that they were far from being happy, and they had scarcely any peaceful moments to hope for in their old days. The arrival of the carriage caused no little surprise and excitement at the Pine Farm; for since the existence of the farm never perhaps had a carriage,—at least never had so handsome a one,—been there. No sooner had the young farmer's wife seen the carriage stop before the door, than she hastened to go to it. "Sir," said she, "allow me to assist you to get out, and also the ladies, your daughters, I presume." She had just presented her hand to one of the young ladies, when she recognised her to be Mary herself, and with an exclamation of surprise she let go her hand as if she had touched a serpent, drew back, and blushed and grew pale by turns. The old farmer was working in his garden. The Count, the Countess, and Amelia ran to this good old man, took him by the hand, and thanked him for his benevolence towards Mary and her father, and thanked him for it in the most affectionate manner. "Ah," said the honest peasant, "I owe that good man more than he ever owed me. The blessing of heaven came with him into our house, and if I had followed his advice in everything, I should

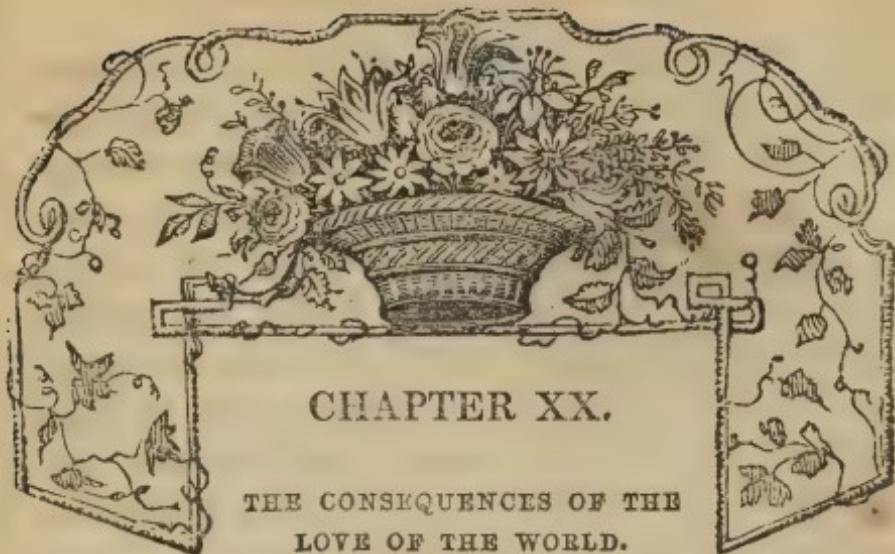
have been much better for it at this moment. Since his death I have no pleasure in anything but this garden. It is, besides, to his wise advice that I am indebted for reserving this little corner of ground, and from him I learned to cultivate it. Since I have not had strength to follow the plough, I have occupied myself here, and I seek among herbs and flowers the peace that I no longer find in my own house.” In the meantime Mary had gone to look for the good old farmer’s wife in her little room, and she was now leading her by the hand. She begged her continually not to be alarmed, for the good old woman was quite overcome. She approached with a timid and embarrassed air, and was distressed to find herself overwhelmed with thanks.

The good old people were very much confused, and cried for joy like children. At last the farmer, addressing Mary, said, “Did I not tell you that your filial piety would receive its reward ! Well, there is my prophecy fulfilled.” Meantime the old woman had taken courage, and said, “Yes, yes, your father was right with his maxim : ‘He who clothes the flowers well knows how to take care of you.’” Their daughter-in-law stood at some distance and said, within herself, “Well, well ; what won’t happen in this life ! This miserable beggar—now look at her !—She is a young lady of high rank. Who would have thought of such a thing ? There is not a woman in our town

who can be compared with her now. But every one knows however, who she is. They know that yesterday she set out from here, with her little package under her arm, to go and beg here and there in the country. The Count had not heard this abusive language, but it was enough for him to see the mocking look and angry appearance of this woman, "That is a wicked creature," said he, and he walked twice round the garden in a very thoughtful mood. "Listen, my good old man," said he at last, stopping before the farmer. "I have a proposition to make to you. I have given Mary the little piece of ground which was cultivated by her father. But Mary is not yet ready to go to housekeeping. What can prevent you from retiring there? It will suit you, I am certain, and I know beforehand that the owner will not exact any rent from you. You can there cultivate as you choose herbs and flowers; and, above all, you will find in that pretty habitation both rest and peace in your old days." The Count's wife, the Countess Amelia, and Mary, insisted that the old people should accept this offer. But there was no need of persuasion. They were happy to be taken from their present uncomfortable situation. At this moment the young farmer came home from the fields. He was very anxious to know what miracle brought to his farm a carriage drawn by four white horses. The moment he knew what was proposed to his father and mo-

ther, he consented to it, although it cost him a great deal to part with his old parents. His greatest grief had been to see them so badly treated by their own daughter-in-law, and it was a great consolation for him to think that they were going to be more happy. The young farmer's wife, completely overcome by passion at finding this state of things, said to the Count, "It is a great favour that you are bestowing on us, in ridding us of these old people." The Count promised he would send for the old man and his wife as soon as every thing was ready. Then he and the company stepped into the carriage and rode off.





CHAPTER XX.

THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE LOVE OF THE WORLD.

HE noble Count did not fail to keep his word. The next autumn a carriage was sent from Eichbourg to the Pine Farm, to bring the old people. The son wept bitterly when he saw that he was going to lose his old father and mother. The daughter-in-law, who had counted the days and hours until the moment of their departure, felt the keenest joy in being at last quite rid of them. But it was soon seen that her joy was not to be unalloyed. The coachman presented her a note, signifying that she should pay all that had been stipulated for the support of her father and mother-in-law, and that the price of provisions, valued in money according to the current market price, should be paid by her every quarter. She became violently angry, fretted, and fumed. "We are overreached after all," said she. If they had stayed here, it would not have cost half as much." The son was delighted that he

could thus soothe the old age of his parents in spite of his wife, but he took good care not to show his joy. The old people set off in the carriage the next morning, followed by the blessings of their son, and the secret maledictions of their daughter-in-law. This wicked woman had the fate which her conduct towards her parents deserved, and which is always the lot of avarice and inhumanity. She had placed her money in the hands of a merchant who had just set up a manufactory, and who had promised to pay her ten per cent. The annual interest was added to the capital, which produced new interest, and this also produced other. The farmer's wife thought herself the happiest of women, and had no greater pleasure in the world than to make her calculation of the sum to which all this money would amount, in ten and in twenty years. But to all these happy dreams soon succeeded a sudden and terrible reverse. The enterprise of the merchant did not succeed, and his goods were sold by order of the sheriff. This was a thunderstroke for the farmer's wife. From the moment that she heard of this catastrophe she no longer had any repose. She was seen almost all day either on the road running to the lawyer, or to her neighbours, complaining of her hard lot, and she spent the night in weeping and scolding. Atlast, instead of her ten thousand dollars, she received some hundreds. Then she gave up to despair; life was terrible to her, and she

wished for death. Eaten up with continued cares, she was attacked with a fever which never left her. Her husband wished to go for the physician of the village, but she would not consent to it. For this time the farmer resisted seriously, and sent for the doctor; but his wife in a passion threw the medicine out of the window, without having even uncorked the bottle. At last she became so seriously ill, that her husband requested the minister of Erlenbrunn to come and see her. He did so frequently during her sickness, and talked to her in the most persuasive tone, to induce her to repent and mend her ways, to detach her heart from the things of this earth, and to turn to God. But this advice made her very angry. She looked at the good minister with utter astonishment. "I do not know," said she, "for what purpose the minister comes to preach penitence to me. He ought to have delivered such a sermon to the merchant who stole our money; yes, that would have been just the thing. As for me, I do not see that I have any great need of repentance. As long as I was able to go out, I went regularly to church on Sunday, and at home I never failed to say my prayers every day. I have not ceased to work all my life to heap up money, and to behave like the most perfect model of virtue and economy. I defy any living soul to slander me, and among all the poor people who have come to my door, not one of them can complain that I sent him away."

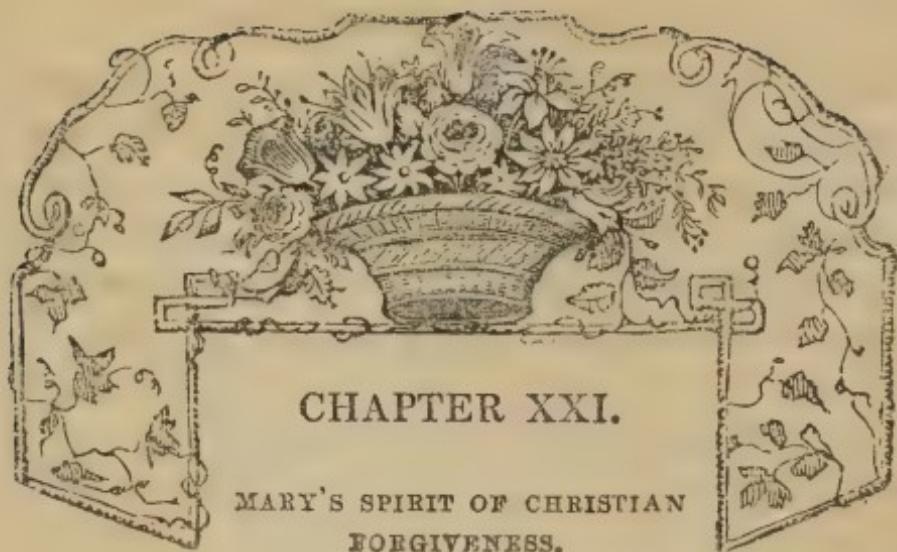
without giving him something. Now I should like to know how any one could behave better. I should have thought that the minister would have considered me one of the most pious and virtuous people of all his parish." The venerable pastor saw himself obliged to take a more expressive tone, to lead her to amend her ways. He proved to her at last, and in the most palpable manner, that she loved money more than anything in the world ; and that avarice, which she was wrong in confounding with economy, was effectually a real idolatry. He represented to her that she must put among her sins these transports of anger which overcame her ; that the most lovely of all virtues, filial affection, had totally failed her ; that by her avarice she had poisoned the days of her husband, cruelly driven away the poor orphan Mary, and even turned off her husband's old parents,—those whom she ought to have cherished and honoured as if they were her own ; that with a fortune like hers, she was far from having fulfilled the important duty of charity from having given here and there a little piece of bread or a handful of flowers to a poor man, often merely to get rid of him ; that she knew nothing of true love to man, founded on sincere love to God ; that the essence of Christianity was love to God and men ; that in spite of all her boasting of going to church, public worship could not save her soul, for it had never made her any better ; and finally, that all

her prayers coming from a heart unwarmed by love, could not be truly prayer. In this faithful way did he talk to her, but she would not allow the zealous pastor to say any more. She began to sob and cry out of passion.

The good pastor, quite troubled, took his hat and cane and went away. "Alas!" said he, "how difficult it is for a heart set upon the things of this world to taste those of heaven! How far is such a heart from the kingdom of God. Such a heart considers itself excused before God by the repetition of a few vain words, and thinks its duty towards its neighbour is performed by throwing to the poor a few superfluous crumbs. However, people remain incorrigible, and go so far in their blindness as to mistake vice for virtue. "Alas!" said he, in passing near the garden, and looking at it; "how wrong some people are in supposing that to be rich is to be happy. This farmer's rich wife, with all her money and all her goods, never had in all her life one of those happy hours which were bestowed in such rich plenty, on poor Mary amidst the flowers of this garden." However, the farmer's wife had yet much to suffer. She spent whole nights in coughing. Her avarice scarcely allowed her to take the proper remedies of nourishment. Her sufferings were not mitigated by any consoling thought. She was utterly unwilling to resign herself to God, and to submit to the Divine will. The good minister tried in every im-

aginable way to bring her mind to a better frame. She was occasionally a little softened during the last days of her life, but never evinced any true repentance. At last she died in the flower of her age, a deplorable instance of the effects of avarice, and passion, and love of the world.





CHAPTER XXI.

MARY'S SPIRIT OF CHRISTIAN FORGIVENESS.

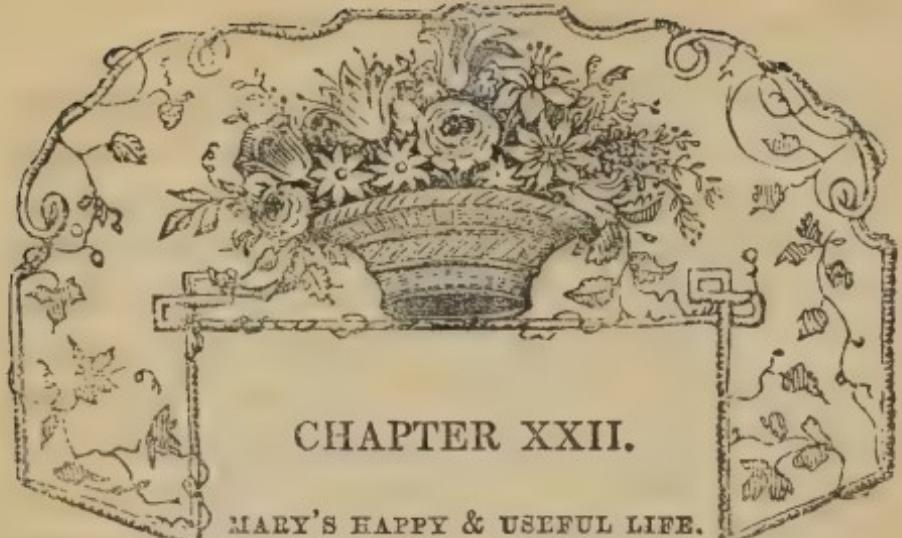
AFTER a while, Mary went with the family of the Count to the city, in which he resided part of the year. While there, a clergyman, whose white hairs announced an advanced age, came one morning to the residence of the Count, and asked for Mary. He told her he was charged with a commission for her. A person very ill, and probably near to death, desired to speak with her before she died. She could not die in peace unless this favour was granted her. The old minister said, that the person was not willing to say anything except to Mary herself. This request astonished Mary very much. She consulted the Countess as to what she ought to do. The Countess, who knew the clergyman to be a pious and prudent man, advised her to go with him. At the request of the clergyman, old Anthony accompanied them. They walked for a long time to the most retired part of the suburbs, and arrived at last at the door of a house situated

in a by-street, which presented the most gloomy aspect. There were five staircases to mount, the two last of which were so dark, so narrow, and so broken, that Mary felt seized with fear. The clergyman stopped before an old door, formed of planks, nailed together without having been planed. "This is it," said he; "but wait a little." He went in for a moment, and then returned for Mary, who then entered with him the most miserable garret ever seen. The window was narrow and dark, and the panes were filled with paper. A forlorn truckle-bed, covered with a more forlorn mattress, or rather an old straw bed, a broken chair near the bed, a stone pitcher on the chair, with neither handle nor cover, composed the furniture. The patient stretched on the bed, was truly a frightful object. Mary thought she saw a skeleton move, and begin to speak with a frightful voice, which resembled the rattle of death, and to extend to her a hand which seemed nothing but skin and bone. Mary trembled in every limb. It was with great difficulty that at last she learned, by the indistinct words pronounced with difficulty, —that this frightful phantom was *Juliette* :—*Juliette*, who, at the castle of Eichbourg, had been the cause of all her distress. This wretched woman had learned from the minister that Mary was in the city, with the family of the Count. Her design in sending for her was to ask her pardon with respect to the ring. If she had begged the

clergyman not to mention her name it was because she was afraid that Mary, justly irritated, would refuse to come. Mary had too much Christian sensibility not to be affected even to tears. She made many declarations, assuring her that all, absolutely all, was forgiven a long time since, and that the only feeling she experienced was a sentiment of the deepest and most lively pity. "Alas!" said Juliette, "I am a great sinner; I have deserved my fate. Forgetfulness of God, contempt of good advice, the exclusive love of dress, of flattery, and of pleasure, was the first source of misery, and this it is which has brought me so low. I die the victim of my follies. Ah!" cried she, raising her voice in a pathetic tone, and weeping bitterly, "I fear a more dreadful fate awaits me in the world to come. You have deigned to pardon me, you whom I so cruelly offended: but I feel the weight of God's displeasure now settling on my soul." Mary had a long conversation with her, and endeavoured to turn her to the precious Saviour, who would receive her if she would repent. But she was obliged to leave her without being satisfied as to her state of mind, and the idea of the sinful Juliette, perishing without hope continually pressed on her mind, and weighed down her spirits. She was continually saying to herself, "That frightful phantom was Juliette, the beautiful Juliette." These words were in her mouth almost every instant of the day. Then she recol-

lected her little apple-tree in blossom withered by the frost, and what her father had said to her on that occasion: the most consoling words he had said on his death-bed, presented themselves to her mind, and she renewed the promise which she had made to God to live entirely to his glory. She remembered the declaration of our Saviour, "Do good to them that hate you, and pray for them who despitefully use you, and persecute you." Under these feelings she implored the Countess to relieve the distress of Juliette. This generous lady sent her medicine, food, linen, and every thing of which she stood in need. But it was all too late. At the age of twenty-three, she died a miserable evidence of the folly and wickedness of doing injury to others, to promote what we absurdly suppose our own advantage. Juliette gave no evidence of repentance, but died as she had lived, without God—and without hope.





CHAPTER XXII.

MARY'S HAPPY & USEFUL LIFE.

THE next spring, when the country was covered with verdure and flowers, the Count, accompanied by his wife and daughter, went to his house at Eichbourg. Mary accompanied them, and took her accustomed place in the carriage by the side of Amelia. Towards evening, when they approached Eichbourg, and when Mary saw, by the light of the setting sun, the steeple of the church, the Count's castle, and her father's house, she was so much touched, that she could not refrain her tears. "Alas!" said she, "when I left Eichbourg, I was far from expecting ever to come back again. How mysterious are the ways of Providence, how good is God!" The carriage stopped before the door of the castle. The officers of the Count, and all persons attached to his service, were waiting to receive him. Mary had a most flattering reception. Every one evinced the greatest joy at seeing her again, and congratulated her on having been recognised so

manifestly innocent. The old judge who had condemned her, took her hand with quite paternal tenderness, asked her pardon in the presence of all the assistants, showed his gratitude to the Count and Countess, for the nobleness of their proceeding in the reparation of the injustice committed, and assured them all that he had to reproach himself with this misfortune more than any one, and that he was willing to do everything in his power to acquit his debt. The following day Mary rose very early. What had awakencd her so early was partly joy, and partly the light of the sun, which shone brightly into her chamber. She ran to visit the paternal dwelling, and also the garden. On her way she met only countenances expressive of gaiety. A crowd of young people, to whom in infancy she had been in the habit of giving flowers, had grown so tall that she was quite astonished. The old farmer and his wife, who had now been some time settled on the place, came out to meet her, kissed her affectionately, and told her how happily and contentedly they lived. Tears of joy were in the farmer's eyes. "When," said he, "you were without a home, we received you under our roof; and now, when we were turned out of our own house, you gave us this charming habitation in which we may spend our declining days." "Yes," said his wife, "it is always well to be obliging and hospitable. We never know how soon we shall receive it again."

" Well, well ! " answered the old man, " we did not think of that then ; that was not our object. However, the maxim is not the less true. *Do good to others, and you will always find some to do good to you.*" Mary entered the house. The sight of the room, of the place where her father used to sit, awoke in her breast sad recollections. She walked round the garden. She kissed every tree planted by her father, as if in each one she saw again an old acquaintance ; but she stopped particularly before the little apple-tree, then all covered with beautiful flowers. " Alas ! " said she, " of what little consequence is the life of man on earth ! He dies, and the little bushes survive him." She rested under the arbour where she had passed so many happy hours with her father. While she looked around in this garden which he had cultivated by the sweat of his brow, she thought she still saw him. Tears streamed from her eyes at this recollection. But one thought rendered her calm, and soothed her heart ; it was that he inhabited a happier abode, and that he was reaping the harvest of the seed he had sown in this world. Every spring, Mary went to spend some weeks at the castle. Cherished and honoured by every one, she there spent the happiest life, serving God, and endeavouring to do good. She loved particularly to visit among the children of the village, and to talk to them of their Saviour ; and she had the happiness of believing that many of them, under

her instrumentality, gave their hearts to God.
Thus she spent her life in doing good.

"There is a voice to mercy true,
To them who mercy's path pursue,
That voice shall bliss impart.
There is a sight from man concealed,
That sight, the face of God revealed,
Shall bless the pure in heart."





CHAPTER XXIII.

THE TOMB OF MARY'S FATHER.

HE tomb of James had been finished according to the promise which Amelia had made to Mary on the grave of the good man. It was a monument of elegant simplicity, constructed of white marble, and ornamented with an epitaph in gilded letters. To the name of the deceased, to his age, and to his double profession of gardener and basket-maker, nothing had been added but these words of Jesus, which certainly deserve to be engraven in letters of gold. "I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." Underneath a skilful workman had cut the figure of the basket which the Lord made use of, in delivering Mary from her trouble, on the grave even of her father. Amelia had drawn the basket, after having had it filled with the most beautiful flowers by the hand of Mary: and the drawing, which was a striking resemblance, was given to the artist. Underneath the basket was

written this maxim of the holy Scripture, a maxim well worthy of reflecting on, “ All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof as the flower of the field. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth, but the word of the Lord endureth for ever.” It was with great pleasure that the good minister of Erlenbrunn, Mary’s early friend, had this monument put in its place. The dark foliage of the fir-trees contributed to relieve this tomb, which presented to the eye an uncommonly beautiful aspect; and when the rose-tree, growing on the grave, was in bloom, and the green branches covered with roses, some half open, others entirely blown, bent over the marble, which was of a dazzling whiteness, nothing could be prettier. This monument was the most beautiful ornament of the rural graveyard, and the most remarkable curiosity of the village. The good minister never received any strangers without taking them to see this monument. Every one observed—that it was a good idea to have put a basket of flowers on the tomb of a man who was at the same time a gardener and a basket maker. “ Ah !” the minister would say,—“ It is something better than a good idéa. This basket of flowers tells more than you believe, and it is not without some reason, that our villagers look upon it as a symbol of a touching story. Yes, this ground on which we tread has been well bathed with tears.” Then he never failed to relate to attentive strangers, the history of the BASKET OF

FLOWERS, and conclude his recital with this grand truth, which the whole story is intended to illustrate—**PIETY TO GOD AND TRUTH TOWARDS MEN SHALL NEVER FAIL TO TRIUMPH OVER THE MALICE OF THE WORST OF FOES.** Let our readers be persuaded, that, under all circumstances, it is best to do as Mary did; fear God, reverence your earthly parents, never tell a falsehood, put full trust in God, give the heart to Jesus, live happy, and die with the sure prospect of eternal glory.



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